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**“Are We Doing Enough?” US Foreign Policy and the Soviet
Nationalities, 1977-1984**

Christopher Campbell

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Glasgow



University
of Glasgow

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Abstract

Between 1977 and 1984, a group of policymakers inside the United States government attempted to harness the growing unrest among the Soviet Union's ethnic nationalities, with the objective of undermining their geopolitical rival and serving America's Cold War interests. These officials were motivated by long-standing beliefs about the nature of the Soviet system and the latent power of nationalism as a crucial vulnerability within the USSR. As the relative stability of the *détente* era passed, a more confrontational relationship emerged between the United States and the USSR. The growth of the global human rights movement and deep structural changes within the international system during the 1970s had opened up new opportunities for American policymakers to attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union.

During the Carter administration, and with the blessing of the president, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and a small cadre of hard-line officials began to focus on the internal nature of the Soviet regime and the domestic drivers of Soviet foreign policy. Through increased research and regular seminars, these officials hoped to improve awareness and knowledge of Soviet nationality issues inside the US government and explore ways to reach the ethnic groups inside the USSR. Radio broadcasting and covert book publication programs were a central part of this strategy, although these policies were never fully accepted as a central part of the administration's Soviet strategy. In 1981, the incoming Reagan administration contained many individuals, such as Soviet expert Richard Pipes, who were highly sympathetic to these ideas. Reagan officials were eager to explore ways of assaulting the internal cohesion of the Soviet Union as an official objective of US foreign policy, in order to promote greater democratisation and pluralism within the USSR. As such, serious attempts were made to craft concrete policies which would exploit ethnic tensions inside the Soviet Union, before these concepts finally fell from favour in 1984.

This thesis explores these themes, offering an in-depth study of the Carter and Reagan administrations' efforts to exploit the weaknesses of the USSR by manipulating the growing ethnic resentments within the Soviet system. These policies were driven by hard-line individuals in both administrations, figures who held long-standing beliefs that the US government should be doing more to undermine the USSR by embracing policies designed to stir up the Soviet nationalities.

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List of Abbreviations

AAD	Access to Archival Databases
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIB	Board for International Broadcasting
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DJCL	Digital Jimmy Carter Library
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
FY	Financial Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Produce
ICA	International Communication Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
INR	Intelligence and Research
JCPL	Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
LoC	Library of Congress
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NFAC	National Foreign Assessment Center
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
NSPG	National Security Planning Group
NSSD	National Security Study Directive
NWG	Nationalities Working Group
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PD	Presidential Directive

PPS	Policy Planning Staff
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RRDL	Ronald Reagan Digital Library
RRPL	Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCC	Special Coordination Committee
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SIG	Senior Interdepartmental Group
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USG	United States Government
USIA	United States Information Service
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOA	Voice of America

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Being able to undertake this doctorate in a subject I love has been one of the great blessings of my life. It has also been one of the toughest things I've ever done. When I commenced this project 4 years ago nothing prepared me for the ways it would challenge me, stretch me, push me to the very limits of what I was capable of, and maybe even a little beyond. This work has elated me, frustrated me, depressed me, and fulfilled me. The fact I have even reached the end, and I'm now able to submit this thesis, is quite simply because of the support and love I've had along the way from good people.

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Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Christopher Campbell

Signature: _____

For Gillian, Zac and Aria

Introduction

Between 1977 and 1984 a group of American policymakers set out to undermine the internal political legitimacy of the Soviet Union by exploiting the growing ethnic and nationality tensions within the USSR. The late 1970s witnessed the end of the détente era, as the Cold War entered a new period of confrontation and hostility, and for certain US foreign policy practitioners this tumult offered an opening for new ideas to enter into US Cold War strategy. Hawkish policymakers in both the Carter and the Reagan administrations began to increasingly focus on the internal nature of the Soviet regime, believing the inner dynamics of the USSR were important drivers of Soviet foreign policy as well as a source of potential vulnerability in the seemingly unassailable Soviet citadel. One such vulnerability was the latent restlessness of the Soviet nationalities, the long-repressed and almost countless non-Russian ethnic and linguistic groups which lay scattered across the vast territory of the USSR. This was a subject which had largely been ignored by the American foreign policy establishment since the early days of the Cold War, but an area which certain hard-line individuals within the US government were keen to see given a more prominent position in America's strategy towards the USSR. The true nature of détente and the relative US and Soviet interpretations of what it meant remain points of contention among historians, but by the end of the 1970s it was becoming clear that a change in the dynamics of the US-Soviet relationship was emerging. In this climate, and driven by the forceful personalities and ideas of officials within the US government, the concept of using the Soviet nationalities to destabilise and promote pluralistic reform within the Soviet Union began to gain currency at a time when Cold War tensions were once again reaching fever pitch.

For hard-line individuals inside the Carter administration, the changing nature of competition with the Soviet Union opened up the possibility for new directions in US policy, directions which would be far more attuned to the internal nature of the Soviet system and probing for any weaknesses which could be exploited. For the US and the USSR, détente had marked a period of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other's systems, with relations firmly rooted in areas of mutual interest, arms reduction talks, and other matters of great power diplomacy. The upheavals of the 1970s, which saw the signing of the Helsinki accords and the growth in transnational human rights activism, the struggle for self-determination in many parts of the developing world, and technological and economic innovation, all led to both a greater propensity and ability to monitor the internal workings of the Soviet regime. At the same time, certain US policymakers began to move away from

the secure familiarity of détente high politics and train their focus on renewing a competitive edge in America's relations with the Soviets.

Individuals such as Carter's national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski held long-standing, forceful beliefs about the nature and weaknesses of the Soviet system and was determined to take a more muscular approach to the USSR during his time at the helm of American foreign policy. Brzezinski became the driving force for a new direction in US Soviet strategy, one which was dogged in its determination to make life difficult for the Soviet authorities in a myriad of ways, eager to exploit the internal contradictions of the Soviet empire. Brzezinski's action-packed portfolio meant this task was often taken up by like-minded hard-liners within the administration, who took their cue from the national security adviser and set about rattling the Soviets from the inside. Of particular interest to Brzezinski and his cadre were the Soviet nationalities within the USSR. A nation of diverse linguistic and cultural dimensions, with over 100 ethnic groups, the Soviet Union had found it difficult to squeeze centuries old traditions into the communist vision of an egalitarian and Sovietised society. These minorities were on the receiving end of repression and domination under Moscow's rule, much as they had been during the tsarist period, and resentment bubbled under the surface. US officials began to wonder how they could make use of this situation.

These developments didn't just signal a change in strategy, they also marked the return of ideology and ideas to American Cold War statecraft¹. The ideological dimensions of the early Cold War years had been downplayed during the period of détente, as the focus fell on the material and military aspects of superpower competition, while at the same time the US government pursued arms limitation talks and remained largely non-critical towards the internal oppression of Soviet dissidents and national groups. Brzezinski understood and appreciated the hard power aspects of competition with the Soviets very well, but he also understood the Cold War was a battle of ideas and competing visions of world order. The American commitment to national self-determination and human rights were weapons which could, and should, be wielded more effectively toward the USSR in his view. Brzezinski saw the Soviet system as an unnatural attempt to suppress the deeply tribal character of human nature, a tribalism expressed through devotion to language, to customs, and to place. He also viewed it as a latent and potentially very destructive weakness inside the body politic of the Soviet Union, and one which American foreign policy should be paying infinitely more

¹ For background reading on the role of ideas in shaping foreign policy, see Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane's edited collection of essays, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Andrew Bacevich's fine compendium, *Ideas and American Foreign Policy: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

attention to. Brzezinski dominated the shaping of US foreign policy during the late 1970s, and he used his position to introduce new concepts and mould strategy to engage competitively with the Soviets across multiple spheres. His long-standing interest in the Soviet nationalities and their potential for unrest were now applied to US foreign policy, from the earliest days of his time in the White House he instructed members of the NSC such as Paul Henze to devise a coherent strategy for exploiting these internal weaknesses. Henze was also responsible for the creation of the Nationalities Working Group, which was the main forum aimed at generating policies towards the Soviet nationalities within the US government.

Nevertheless, the American foreign policy establishment remained committed to the détente process, and the president himself had signalled an eagerness to move past the bipolarity of the Cold War. Brzezinski and Henze faced strong pushback from the State Department, who, while accepting the need for a greater understanding of ethnic issues inside the USSR, saw little value in stirring up trouble for Moscow using the Soviet nationalities. Alongside this institutional opposition, efforts to reach the Soviet nationalities through radio broadcasting and covert means were often held up by budgetary concerns and bureaucratic infighting. These factors meant that US efforts to target the Soviet nationalities during the Carter presidency always remained somewhat outside of the mainstream, viewed with suspicion by career foreign service officers and Washington policymakers alike. There was a lingering sense that these interests were merely the pet project of eccentrics and hard-line anti-communist hawks, despite having the backing of the president's national security adviser.

That being said, these officials clearly opened a door which had largely remained closed since the early days of the Cold War. They peered behind the Iron Curtain and saw resentful nationality groups labouring under Moscow's rule, and they saw opportunity. They also brought an ideological dimension to US statecraft that had largely been missing, one built around the ideas of freedom and national self-determination, once again envisioning the Cold War as a moral struggle between two utterly incompatible worldviews. As the 1970s drew to a close, the Carter administration's position towards the Soviet Union hardened further, US-USSR relations were at their lowest ebb for decades, and there was a feeling that Soviet overseas adventurism must be halted in its tracks. But after Carter passed from the scene, a new administration took control of US Cold War strategy, one which was more agreeable to waging ideological warfare on the Soviet Union, and far more amenable to

using Soviet internal weaknesses, such as its ethnic nationalities, as a weapon in the America's arsenal.

Ronald Reagan swept into the White House with an entirely different approach to that of his predecessor. He fundamentally believed communism to be utterly evil, and he was not shy about declaring this publicly. Furthermore, in the early days of his administration the White House was stacked with anti-communist hard-liners. These officials were not the establishment foreign policy types of previous administrations, these individuals were zealous, and they were keen to take the fight to the Soviet Union. They were also far more attuned to the importance of regime types and the internal dynamics of states as drivers of foreign policy, believing it was vital to take this into account when crafting the administration's new strategy toward the Soviet Union. Not only was it important to understand the internal nature of the Soviet Union, and the factors which propelled its foreign policy, it was also crucial to gain a better knowledge of its internal weaknesses and craft policies which could exploit them. Again, the focus soon fell on the Soviet nationalities and there was a growing belief within the administration, and across various agencies of the US government more generally, that the US could harness these forces and direct them in ways which may lead to greater pluralism and decentralisation of the Soviet system, while accepting that America had limited leverage at its disposal to do so.

Once more, these policies were driven by hard-line individuals such as Richard Pipes, who shared Brzezinski and Henze's long-standing interest in the Soviet nationalities and was keen to draft and implement policies specifically geared towards ethnic issues inside the USSR. The Carter administration had already begun the military build-up for which Reagan's first term became synonymous, but the Reagan administration also picked up and developed the enterprises towards the Soviet nationalities of hard-liners like Henze, carrying them on and developing them further. Even after Pipes departed from the White House in late 1982, there remained an appetite to place greater emphasis on Soviet ethnic issues and carve out a space for them within wider US Soviet strategy. With the Reagan administration's adoption of NSDD-75, its official policy framework for dealing with the Soviets, in early 1983, US Soviet strategy now openly declared its objective to move the Soviet Union in a more democratic direction, and the Soviet nationalities were viewed as an important part of this scheme. However, while late 1983 saw tensions between the superpowers reach fever pitch, it would also mark the beginning of a de-escalation which would continue over the course of the 1980s, especially once Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985.

Within the administration itself, the hard-line stance of the first two years of Reagan's presidency began to give way, and a greater appreciation for the need for dialogue with the Soviets emerged. Spurred by the departure of several hard-liners and the assent of more moderate voices like George Shultz and Jack Matlock, the desire to bring down the Soviet empire from within became an increasingly marginal view, despite being enshrined in official US policy documents. And as a result, policies towards stirring up the Soviet nationalities now found themselves subsumed by the greater weight placed on engagement with the Soviet leadership. From 1984, the administration's interest in the Soviet nationalities merely formed part of the general overarching emphasis placed on human rights inside the USSR within the context of broader US-Soviet negotiations, rather than as a weapon to use against Moscow. The changing nature of US-Soviet competition and the transcendence of *détente* into a sharper period of Cold War confrontation during the late 1970s had opened the way for fresh ideas to gain currency within the US government. Pushed by hard-line individuals like Brzezinski, Henze and Pipes, these ideas found expression in the form of covert actions and regular informal gatherings of scholars and practitioners, but ultimately fizzled out as US-Soviet relations stabilised in the mid-1980s and the Cold War drew to a close.

This thesis will explore the attempts made by factions within the US government, across the Carter and Reagan administrations, to exploit the ethnic tensions of the Soviet Union as part of American Cold War strategy between 1977 and 1984. These policymakers hoped to achieve a better understanding of the Soviet nationality problem, to exploit these tensions, and to move the USSR in a more reformist and decentralised direction. There was a recognition that there was a lack of expertise of these issues within the US government, a situation which needed to be addressed through research and a greater emphasis on linguistic training. There was also a view that greater effort needed to be made to reach the Soviet nationalities through radio broadcasts and the covert distribution of literature. These activities were driven by the beliefs of hard-line anti-communists, who believed that the Soviet Union was riven with internal contradictions and weaknesses, and the US government should be doing more to exploit them. These ideas were promoted inside the Carter administration by Brzezinski and taken up by ideologues such as Paul Henze and officials at various agencies, although they never formed an integral part of US Soviet strategy, always somewhat outside of the mainstream.

After the transition to the Reagan administration in 1981, these ideas found a home in a sympathetic White House which wished to seriously ramp up attempts to exploit weaknesses

within the USSR and promote pluralistic reform inside the Soviet system. But by 1984, with the passing of the earlier hard-line posture of the Reagan administration, these ideas fell out of favour. There has been remarkably little attention paid by historians of American foreign relations to US policies towards the Soviet nationalities during the later years of the Cold War, indeed this dissertation is the first in-depth study to explore this topic. This thesis will examine the efforts of US policymakers to craft policies aimed at both understanding and exploiting the Soviet nationalities problem in order to serve American Cold War interests. It reveals that these policies were driven by powerful ideas and powerful personalities inside the Carter and Reagan administrations, and were the result of a greater inclusion of ideology in US foreign policy than had been the case during the period of *détente* and the relaxation in Cold War tensions, before ultimately fizzling out in the mid 1980s.

This dissertation will engage with the period 1977-1984, when the era of *détente* came shuddering to a halt, and a new era of superpower confrontation emerged. This was a period of upheaval and change within the international system, with both the US and the USSR re-orientating their foreign policies accordingly. Within this context, this project will explore the evolution of America's Soviet strategy and how an increased focus on the internal nature of the USSR led to a growing desire to create policies geared toward the Soviet nationalities, grafting them into US strategy. This thesis is the first work to explore this development in-depth, utilising underused archival documents from the period, many of which historians have thus far failed to engage with. Work on US policy towards the Soviet nationalities has been hampered by a lack of declassification of all the relevant documents, but by piecing together available documents from across multiple sources, this dissertation allows a clearer picture to emerge of the individuals, goals, and tools involved in developing these policies. That the US government was interested in exploiting Soviet weaknesses specifically through their ethnic groups is often remarked upon in passing by historians, but by deeply exploring this topic this dissertation will add considerably to our knowledge of both the period and the strategic thinking which was taking place inside the Carter and Reagan administrations. Quite simply, no historian has conducted an in-depth research project on US policy towards the Soviet nationalities in the later Cold War years, this dissertation is the first of its kind using the available documentary evidence, and thus fills an important gap in the literature.

The primary documents for this project have been underutilised by scholars, mainly because they were declassified in stages, and because they are scattered across various collections. Gathering together the evidence for this dissertation involved combining deep research at

the Carter and Reagan presidential libraries with painstaking research of CIA and State Department documents released by FOIA over the last few years. Despite many of the documents on Soviet nationalities policy remaining classified and under review, we now have enough material available to begin the process of truly understanding American objectives in this area, and how the Soviet nationalities tied into wider US strategy towards the USSR during the late Cold War. As more documents become available over the next few years this area of research should open up further, but this dissertation offers an opening salvo aimed at truly exploring these events and the individuals involved for the first time.

One difficulty in carrying out this project was the lack of secondary material available on US policy towards the Soviet nationalities, for the simple reason that there has been very little scholarship produced on this topic. In order to create a picture of these events, this dissertation builds on the existing literature on US-Soviet relations during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Carter's foreign policy, and the early years of the Reagan administration. As such, it contributes to our understanding of the period in multiple ways; it offers the first full-length study of US policy towards the Soviet nationalities during the late Cold War years, it allows a fuller understanding of the Carter administration's Soviet policy and some of the internal debates which were taking place within the American foreign policy establishment during these transcendent years of the Cold War, it adds to the growing work on the consistencies between the Carter and Reagan administration's policies towards the USSR, it fleshes out the Reagan administration's early attempts to undermine the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union and promote pluralism within the USSR, and it explores how the beliefs and ideas of certain foreign policy officials could have direct policy implications for US Cold War strategy. This thesis explores US strategic thinking during a crucial part of the Cold War timeline. It investigates the attempts of American officials to promote change from within the USSR using its own national minority groups, it studies the individuals involved, their policy prescriptions, and the outcomes. Yet more broadly speaking the dissertation is about the role of ideas in foreign policy and the power of personality in driving policy initiatives. This dissertation will detail and examine a previously unexplored US foreign policy endeavour and the individuals involved in the enterprise, and in doing so adds to our knowledge of this critical phase of the Cold War struggle.

Within academia and some policymaking circles, the very act of studying the Soviet nationalities and their relationship to the Soviet state was deemed undesirable, unnecessary, and an outdated fixation of ideologues. The strange and tightly self-policed world of Sovietology had little time for the continuing power of nationalism and religion and

viewed those that did with suspicion bordering on hostility. The nationalities issue was understood to have long been resolved by Moscow, and this feeling permeated both elite universities and the foreign policy establishment in the US. As Alexander Motyl quipped, “most Sovietologists were uninterested in the non-Russians; Washington DC’s collective knowledge was pretty much confined to one State Department analyst, Paul Goble; journalists had no clue about where the “Stans” were, and the public was almost completely ignorant about half the USSR’s population. One European diplomat who was about to be posted to Ukraine asked me to brief him about a country he knew nothing about. His colleagues felt sorry that he was being demoted in so rude a fashion”².

Throughout the Cold War there was always a small number of academics who viewed nationalism as a real threat to the future of the Soviet empire, but these ideas never entered the mainstream of the profession³.

Likewise, within the US government, after initially showing some interest in exploiting ethnic tensions during the early Cold War, the concept had largely fallen out of favour by the 1960s. The United States had never recognised the annexation of the Baltic states into the USSR and would occasionally address the plight of other nationality groups inside the Soviet empire as well. President Eisenhower was responsible for introducing Captive Nations Week, an annual event which highlighted the plight of repressed peoples behind the Iron Curtain and would become something of a yearly ritual, waxing and waning in profile over the course of the Cold War⁴. Pressed by East European ethnic interest groups, the

² Alexander J. Motyl, “The Non-Russians are Coming! The Non-Russians are Coming!: Field Notes from the Front Lines of Soviet Nationality Studies” (Harriman, p30-31)

³ For examples see, Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Hugh Seton Watson, *Nationalism and Communism: Essays 1946-1963* (Westport: Praeger, 1964); Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “The Dialectics of Nationalism in the USSR”, *Problems of Communism* 22, No.3, (May-June 1974): 18-19 and *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan* (Washington DC: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Alexander J. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia Press, 1990); Bohdan Nahaylo, Dohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (New York: The Free Press, 1990).

⁴ For a discussion on ethnic émigré groups, domestic politics and US foreign policy see, Stephen A. Garrett, “Eastern European Ethnic Groups and American Foreign Policy”, *Political Science Quarterly* 93, No.2, (1978); Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Thomas Ambrosio, *Ethnic Identity Groups and US Foreign Policy* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); Trevor Rubenzer and Steven B. Redd, ‘Ethnic Minority Groups and US Foreign Policy: Examining Congressional Decision Making and Economic Sanctions’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (September 2010), pp. 755-777; *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945*, edited by Andrew L. Johns and Mitchell B. Lerner (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018). For an excellent overview of the US government’s flirtations with ethnic lobby groups and the role of Captive Nations Week in Cold War thinking see, Susan D. Fink, “From “Chicken Kiev” to Ukrainian Recognition: Domestic Politics in US Foreign Policy toward Ukraine”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Volume XXI, Number 1/2, June 1997.

Eisenhower administration had looked into the prospect of harnessing Soviet nationality problems to US foreign policy goals during the 1950s, before deciding the enterprise was fraught with difficulty, mainly due to the internal bickering of the émigré groups in the United States. A 1958 National Security Council report summed up the general feeling on these issues within the US foreign policy establishment when it stated, “with the passage of years during which Soviet domination of the Eastern European nations has continued, emigre national committees have proved less productive. This situation has been aggravated by internal factional strife and lack of unified purpose. There is no evidence that emigre politicians have any significant following in their homelands or that in the foreseeable future they will be able to return there to assume a role of political leadership”⁵.

By the period of détente efforts to exploit the ethnic tensions of the Soviet bloc no longer held much interest inside the US government, and these ideas were no longer given much serious consideration by policymakers. There is no doubt at all that Brzezinski and Pipes felt like outsiders in the world of Ivy League academia and the East Coast foreign policy establishment, both because of their ethnic backgrounds and their insistence on straying into areas of research which were deemed rather uncouth by their peers. And there is also no doubt that government officials such as Henze and his like-minded compatriots on the Nationalities Working Group were seen as outsiders among the foreign policy elite, who were still pursuing détente and dialogue with the Soviet Union. Even within the hawkish Reagan White House, these ideas were never fully accepted as mainstream within the administration, and eventually shut down by 1984.

This thesis is not intended to be an in-depth study of the growing ethnic and nationality problems which afflicted the Soviet Union throughout the 1980s, and which ultimately culminated in the break-up and disintegration of the USSR itself in 1991. The reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union have been debated ad nauseum by historians and will continue to be debated long into the future. The extent to which nationalism played a role in the demise of the USSR has also been endlessly discussed, and this thesis does not take a position on that question⁶. This dissertation explores how these growing trends within the

⁵ “Statement of US Policy Toward the Soviet-Dominated Nations in Eastern Europe, National Security Council Report, May 24, 1958, Volume X, Part 1, Eastern Europe Region; Soviet Union; Cyprus, Foreign Relations of United States, 1958-1960

⁶ For the best of scholarly debates on Soviet nationality policy and the role of the nationalism in the collapse of the Soviet empire see, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “Chickens Coming Home to Roost: A Perspective on Soviet Ethnic Relations, *Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 45, No. 2, Rethinking Nationalism and Sovereignty (Winter 1992), pp. 519-548; Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist*

Soviet empire were viewed from the vantage point of Washington DC, and the ways in which US policymakers thought about them and talked about them during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to gauge the success of US efforts to penetrate the Soviet republics and reach the nation minorities there during this period. While it is clear that the Soviets were greatly irked by the radio broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, leading them to attempt to jam the transmissions, it remains difficult to assess how successful these broadcasts actually were in reaching their desired audience and determining if they played any role at all in prodding the national consciousness of the Soviet ethnic groups⁷. Likewise, for assessing the CIA's covert book and publication programs inside the USSR we only have the distribution reports of the intelligence community to study, with the obvious pitfalls involved in this. Elements within the US government hoped to spark the Soviet nationalities and push them towards calls for greater decentralisation and autonomy, but as to whether these attempts were successful at ground level it is difficult to say.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the importance of American political issues and interest groups as drivers of US foreign policy, this thesis is not intended to be an exploration of the domestic influences on the policymakers who wished to increase the US government's focus on the Soviet nationalities and internal weaknesses of the USSR during this period. There can be no doubt that émigré organisations and lobbies representing ethnic groups such as Ukrainians, Balts and Armenians within the United States, were vocal proponents of the American government doing more to highlight the plight of their compatriots within the Soviet Union. These ethnic groups often formed important swing voting constituencies in battleground states, particularly in the Rust Belt, which granted them leverage to influence presidential administrations in important ways. Likewise, the growing importance of human

Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger Eds., *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000); Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Ronald G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2011)

⁷ For literature on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty see, Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Richard H. Cummings, *Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom": Rallying Americans Behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950-1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010); A Ross. Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010)

rights issues and national self-determination during the period led Congress to play a more active role in garnering support for oppressed nationality groups behind the Iron Curtain⁸. Congressional activity often provoked a response from high-ranking White House officials, and undoubtedly US policymakers were aware of these pressures when crafting strategy. These factors were significant during the final years of the Cold War, and for the purposes of this study it is important to acknowledge their influence, while also highlighting that this thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive study of the entire spectrum of influences on the US-Soviet relationship during this period⁹.

Rather, this dissertation will provide an in-depth exploration of a particular group of officials within the US government who, motivated by powerful and long-held beliefs about the ideological nature of the Cold War conflict, were eager to enact policies which would exploit the ethnic tensions within the Soviet Union in order to serve American interests. Furthermore, as will become apparent, these officials were not particularly mindful of domestic political pressures as they crafted their policies towards the Soviet nationalities. Their actions were driven by the power of their own long-standing ideas regarding internal forces within Soviet society, and the latent power of nationalism as a potential Soviet weakness which the US government should exploit as an explicit part of its Cold War strategy. As with any new work there will always be limitations and areas which cannot be fully examined, but what this dissertation does is delve into the ideas, the beliefs, the motivations, the strategic thinking, and the activities of the individuals who promoted efforts within the US government to exploit Soviet ethnic problems in the period 1977 to 1984. It traces their story across two administrations during a crucial period of the Cold War in a way which will hopefully be instructive and interesting, while adding to our knowledge of the era.

Part one of this dissertation takes place between the years of 1977 and 1980, Jimmy Carter was president and both the international system, and the US-Soviet relationship were going through tumultuous change. While previously viewed as a fairly moribund decade, the 1970s are now recognised by historians as a period of tremendous transformation, with innovative

⁸ See Rasmus Sinding Sondergaard, *Reagan, Congress and Human Rights: Contesting Morality in US Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) for a fresh exploration of these themes.

⁹ Domestic politics are essential in understanding the influences which shape a nation's foreign policy. For a recent, and controversial, call for scholars of US foreign policy to return domestic politics to the heart of research on American foreign relations see, Daniel Bessner and Frederik Logevall, "Recentring the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations", *Texas National Security Review*, Volume 3, Issue 2, (Spring 2020).

economic and technological advancements, the emergence of a global human rights network, and Third World de-colonisation combining to alter the nature of world order in profound ways. As such, much of the literature on the Carter administration and US foreign policy at this time has become enmeshed with the exciting new scholarly work being produced on the 1970s¹⁰. Carter arrived in the White House promising a new values-laden American foreign policy, and a break with both the atrophy of the Vietnam years and the cynicism of Nixon and Kissinger's détente. Moving forward, the championing of human rights would lie at the heart of US activity in the world, and Carter wanted to sincerely move past the entrenched bipolarity of superpower rivalry with the Soviet Union. As Samuel Moyn has pointed out, much of this newly energised Western focus on human rights and efforts to transcend the Cold War resulted from a desire to find a new universal mission to replace the failed ideologies of the 20th century, and the 1970s birthed many of the transnational movements for global equality we see today¹¹. The signing of the Helsinki accords in 1975 galvanised the human rights movement and allowed both Western activists and governments to scrutinise the internal nature of the Soviet system in ways which had previously been impossible¹². This also opened new paths for US Cold War strategy.

The Carter administration embodied these impulses in many ways, and they would lead to friction in the US-Soviet relationship as the two very different visions of détente collided. This situation was one which the administration found difficult to navigate, with the

¹⁰ Leading the way in the historiography and reassessment of the 1970's and America's role in the global system were Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, Daniel J. Sargent (eds), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970's in Perspective* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010). For further works which tie the development of US foreign policy into the transformative events of the 1970s see, Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970's* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹¹ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010).

¹² The literature on human rights during the Cold War and the Helsinki accords has exploded over the last few years, creating a veritable sub-field in its own right. For the best of these works see, Thomas, Daniel C. *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Aryeh Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds. *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Sarah B. Snyder, "Human Rights and the Cold War," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, eds. Craig Daigle and Artemy M. Kalinovsky (London, 2015), 243-44; Barbara Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse, Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Michael Cotey Morgan, *The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

conflicting concepts of détente often curtailing effective US policymaking. The Berkeley historian Daniel J Sargent has convincingly argued that after Carter's ascension to the White House, the president pursued a post-Cold War foreign policy, which he calls 'world order politics', despite the realities of the Cold War still remaining firmly in place. Nevertheless, the Carter administration pushed the Soviets hard on human rights, which put the internal nature of the Soviet regime under the spotlight. Sargent believes these contradictions can be explained by the concept of a "historically optimistic" détente which prevailed inside the Carter White House. He states, "the Carter administration thus deprioritized the Cold War... optimistic about the future, the Carter administration assumed that the Soviet Union was on the wrong side of history and that Soviet leaders would have to choose between obsolescence and interdependence".

Sargent believes Carter and Brzezinski wished to assimilate East-West relations into a broader framework of co-operation which would reduce the dominance of the US-Soviet relationship in American foreign policy planning, meaning "the Carter administration thereby presumed that it could push the Soviet Union harder on issues like human rights while preserving détente's gain"¹³. However, by 1978, these optimistic ambitions had given way to the hard realities of superpower competition, and Sargent states, "in 1978, the Carter administration abandoned its preoccupation with world order politics and focused US foreign policy on the containment of the Soviet Union. This strategic reorientation turned not on singular events so much as on the frustration of Carter's attempts to implement his initial world order concept in the face of rising Soviet-American tensions"¹⁴. Sargent shows that throughout the 1970s, US policymakers across three successive administrations struggled to adapt to the upheaval in the international system, often playing catch up as deep structural forces forged a new world.

The literature on the Carter administration's foreign policy is growing with the release of new documents from the period. The Carter presidential library is somewhat behind other presidential libraries in its declassification program in certain areas, and much of the material on the Soviet Union remains classified. Nevertheless, some excellent works have been produced in recent years, both on Carter's foreign policy generally, and his administration's approach to the USSR. This dissertation does not take a position on the overall success of the Carter administration's foreign policy, being more narrowly focused

¹³ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p263

¹⁴ Ibid p261

on its efforts to direct attention onto the Soviet nationalities as part of US Cold War strategy. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the thrust of scholarship on Carter's foreign policy legacy, which has been much maligned by historians yet is currently undergoing something of a revival¹⁵. Most recent scholarship has focused on Carter's policies towards the developing world and his interest in negotiating a peaceful agreement in the Middle East, rather than his Soviet policies. This reflects both the Carter administration's desire for increased emphasis on North-South relations and the Third World, and a lack of availability of primary documents on the administration's Soviet strategy, which is now beginning to change¹⁶.

The conventional literature on Carter's foreign policy tends to divide his presidency into two phases; the first phase focused on transcending the Cold War struggle and emphasising human rights, the second phase witnessing a reversion back to a more traditional focus on containing the Soviet Union at the behest of national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. This is an important debate for the purposes of this dissertation, which argues that within the Carter administration there were hard-line strands focused on undermining the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union from the beginning, although they never fully established themselves as the main drivers of Carter's Soviet policy. Jimmy Carter is looked upon fondly as the most active and humanitarian-minded of all the former presidents, still deeply involved in charitable causes and teaching Sunday school deep into his 90s. However, historians view his record in government as decidedly mixed, with Scott Kaufman delivering

¹⁵ For an early assessment of Carter's foreign policy see, Richard Thornton, *The Carter Years: Toward a New Global Order* (New York: Paragon House, 1991). For positive assessments see, Douglas Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands On' Legacy of Our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (1996): 510; John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); David Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy", *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 1 (2004), p113-144; Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Robert A Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Nancy Mitchell, "The Cold War and Jimmy Carter", Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad Eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2016).

¹⁶ For recent examples of Carter's policies toward the developing world and Middle East see, Piero Gleijeses, "A Test of Wills: Jimmy Carter, South Africa, and the Independence of Namibia", *Diplomatic History*, Volume 34, Issue 5, November 2010, Pages 853-891; Nigel Ashton, "Taking Friends for Granted: The Carter Administration, Jordan, and the Camp David Accords, 1977-1980, *Diplomatic History*, Volume 41, Issue 3, June 2017, Pages 620-645; Craig Daigle, "Beyond Camp David: Jimmy Carter, Palestinian Self-Determination, and Human Rights, *Diplomatic History*, Volume 42, Issue 5, November 2018, Pages 802-830; Michael Franczak, "Human Rights and Basic Needs: Jimmy Carter's North-South Dialogue, 1977-1981", *Cold War History*, Volume 18, 2018, Issue 4, p447-464.

a damning verdict on Carter's own failings as a foreign policy president in "Plans Unravelling: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration"¹⁷.

Kaufman offered an all-encompassing study of the Carter administration's foreign policy, and despite some successes such as the ratification of the Panama Canal treaties, normalising relations with China, the completion of the Camp David accords, and making human rights a lasting component of American diplomacy, he believes the Carter was ultimately a failure in guiding US foreign relations. Kaufman acknowledges the ambitious scope of Carter's goals; to re-orientate American foreign policy away from superpower confrontation and toward the developing world, while reducing arms and promoting human rights. But he believes Carter failed because he attempted to change too much at once, and it was his own leadership style left him unable to deal with internal disputes among his advisers or to properly channel his noble impulses into concrete policy. Furthermore, Kaufman believes the Carter administration gradually began to adopt the more traditional Cold War posture of previous administrations, faced with Soviet aggression and domestic pressure from hawkish elements of the Democratic party, they reverted to a more familiar policy of containment.

This policy shift is also emphasised by Brian J Auten in 'Carter's Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy'. Auten subscribes to the international relations school of realism and believes the change in direction of Carter's Soviet policies were merely the natural reaction to the relative change in the material power capabilities of the competing superpowers. In contrast to Sargent, Auten believes that the role played by high-level policymakers and statesmen are of the most importance in driving the direction of foreign policy as they respond to the changing nature of the international system and the material power of rival states. As such, he believes Carter eventually woke up to the hard-power challenge of the rising Soviet military threat and adjusted his approach accordingly¹⁸.

¹⁷ Scott Kaufman offers a highly critical account of Carter's leadership in, *Plans Unravelling: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008). For other critical assessments of Carter's foreign policy see, Kenton Clymer, "Jimmy Carter, Human Rights and Cambodia", *Diplomatic History* 27, no.2, (2003), p245-278; Donna R. Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa: Cold War Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007); Burton Kaufman and Scott Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr, revised edition* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006); Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); For a more balanced work see Olav Njølstad's chapter, "The Carter Legacy: Entering the Second Era of the Cold War", *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Resolution*, ed. by Olav Njølstad (London: Frankl Cass, 2004).

¹⁸ Brian J. Auten, *Carter's Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

Challenging the conventional wisdom that Carter changed directions in 1978 and adopted a more orthodox Cold War stance from that point on, Nancy Mitchell believes Carter was actually a “Cold Warrior from day one”. In her truly excellent study, “Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War”, Mitchell argues that Carter was a dedicated Cold Warrior throughout his presidency, as evidenced by his policies of containment in Africa and his “deep Cold War instincts” which he displayed immediately on taking office. She challenges the established scholarship by asserting Carter was able to successfully blend these instincts with the promotion of human rights, by pushing back against Soviet adventurism while also pursuing racial equality in southern Africa.

In a meticulously researched book, using the lens of Carter’s policies in Africa to explore the administration’s attitude towards the USSR, Mitchell pushes back against the perception of Carter as a naïve idealist who was forced to change his approach after coming to a better understanding of the Soviet threat. She successfully portrays Carter as a man who viewed the world through Cold War glasses, consistently calling for American strength and seeing no conflict between the pursuit of moral goals and the national interest. Mitchell stresses that Carter’s persona and his interest in less traditional aspects of foreign policy lured people into believing he was not sophisticated in world affairs and somewhat naïve, but that this distracted from the fact he retained a traditional and clear-sighted suspicion of communism and Soviet adventurism like every other Cold War US president¹⁹.

There were missteps to be sure, but Mitchell’s work reveals Carter understood the complexity of Cold War rivalry and the recent scholarship is beginning to reveal more of a coherent Soviet strategy within the Carter White House than was commonly believed. Her work is important for the direction of this dissertation, which seeks to build on Mitchell’s research by stressing Carter’s support for policies which would undermine the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union right from the earliest days of his presidency. While Carter largely left Brzezinski and other hard-liners in the administration to direct these plans, he gave his explicit approval for officials to craft policies which would exploit the inner weaknesses and ethnic tensions of the USSR and attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet regime.

¹⁹ Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Stanford, Stanford University Press 2016).

This is further supported by Robert Gates, who's terrific memoir recounting his service in five Cold War administrations discusses at length the covert operations against the Soviets which Carter sanctioned, explicitly targeting the ethnic minorities of the USSR. Gates states that Carter and his administration waged, "ideological war on the Soviets with a determination and intensity that was very different from its predecessors"²⁰. Carter was no simple-minded naïf, he understood the nature of the Cold War very well, and he showed a steel which historians would do well to consider further. While it is true that the downward spiral in US-Soviet relations caused the Carter administration to step up their efforts at containment of the USSR, and by 1980 the administration's stance had hardened considerably, these policies had been germinating from the time Carter took office in 1977.

Despite the downturn in relations with the Soviets, Carter and his more progressive advisers remained genuinely committed to the cause of human rights behind the Iron Curtain. For the more hawkish elements of the administration, human rights provided an opening to attack the legitimacy of the Soviet regime itself, and tension among repressed ethnic minority groups inside the USSR offered an enticing opportunity which deserved further study and attention by the US government. The proponents of an increased American focus on the Soviet nationality problems were more interested in using this enterprise, and human rights in general, to undermine the Soviet leadership and provoke internal difficulties for the regime. Thus, Soviet ethnic tensions were merely another weapon in the ongoing war on communism, and potentially a very potent one at that. There were certainly disagreements within the administration over Soviet strategy, with liberals in the White House eager to engage with the developing world, pragmatists such as secretary of state Cyrus Vance focused on arms control and maintaining the stability of *détente*, and hawks such as Odom and Huntington remaining engaged in the struggle for geopolitical dominance with the USSR.

These contradictions were also somewhat manifest in the person of Brzezinski, who was both viscerally hawkish on the Soviet Union and eager to enact policies aimed at exploiting its internal weaknesses, yet also keen for US-Soviet relations to be subsumed by a more wide-ranging foreign policy agenda. As with the Carter administration writ large, these apparent contradictions can be understood when you appreciate that Brzezinski's interpretation of *détente* differed greatly from the traditional understanding of the term. Brzezinski plays a central role in this dissertation, the national security adviser was the

²⁰ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insiders Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p95

driving force behind schemes aimed at exploiting the internal weaknesses of the Soviet Union, especially using the nationalities²¹. Patrick Vaughn has detailed how Brzezinski wished to enable a more “reciprocal” form of détente, one which engaged the Soviets in areas of mutual interest and arms control, which allowed the US to engage more freely with the widening world of the 1970s, while also contesting the Soviets in multiple arenas in the hope of engineering their eventual downfall²². This dissertation builds on these insights in its exploration of Brzezinski’s interest in exploiting Soviet ethnic tension, something he had been calling for since his days as a graduate student. In this way, we can see Brzezinski’s long-term support for the promotion of national consciousness among the Soviet nationalities as being explicitly linked to the new-found fervour for human rights and the self-determination which had taken hold in Western governments, and also in his own pursuit of a more activist form of detente which would undermine the very legitimacy of the Soviet system.

Part two of this dissertation begins in early 1981, with the incoming Reagan administration creating a new strategy for its relations with the Soviet Union and ideas geared toward exploiting the Soviet nationalities finding a home within the new administration. US policy towards the Soviet nationalities during the Reagan presidency are framed by the larger ambition of promoting internal change inside the USSR, moving the Soviets in more democratic and pluralistic directions. In order to thoroughly understand the policies aimed at the Soviet nationality groups and the role these ideas played in the overarching thrust of Soviet policy during Reagan’s first term, this dissertation draws on the literature and debates surrounding President Reagan and his strategy towards the USSR, his quest to fashion a new foreign policy for a new era. It is important to note that policies created to exploit Soviet ethnic tensions were not stand-alone enterprises but were part of a larger mission to encourage decentralisation and pluralism within the USSR. As such, they must be considered as one strand of the Reagan administration’s overall Soviet strategy. The main point of contention among scholars is whether Reagan actually had a grand strategy

²¹ There have been surprisingly few works on Brzezinski’s life given his outsized influence on US foreign policy, which spanned many decades. Charles Gati ed., *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) and Justin Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2018) are the best available. Brzezinski’s memoirs offer a valuable, if self-interested, insight into the policymaking process within the Carter White House. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroud, 1983). Brzezinski’s personal papers are housed at the Library of Congress and remain closed to most researchers. Their opening in 2022 will surely spark a rush of works on his life.

²² Vaughan, *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present*, chapter 3, p120.

for defeating the USSR, and if so what did this strategy entail? This dissertation engages with this scholarship, positioning itself among the historical debates around Reagan's worldview and statecraft, the goals of his administration vis a vis the Soviet Union, and the place of the Soviet nationalities within this narrative.

Much of the academic debate surrounding President Reagan's role in the end of the Cold War have centred on the extent to which he had a grand strategy for dealing with the Soviets, while scholarship on Reagan has also long been saturated with popular histories which mythologize the 40th president, some bordering on hagiography. The image of Reagan directing a breath-taking grand strategy and military build-up which brought down the Soviet Union remains intoxicating to some writers, although this view has now received much correction²³. Likewise, attempts by some academics to minimise Reagan's role in the end of the Cold War and underplay it to the point of almost writing him out of the narrative, or portraying him as hopelessly out of his depth, now appear outdated in the face of fresh scholarship²⁴. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in the middle. And that is precisely where James Graham Wilson charts his course in his masterful work on the end of the Cold War. In "The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War", Wilson argues that it was Reagan's political instincts, his adaptability, his negotiation skills, and his willingness to read the historical moment and reach out to Gorbachev which were his greatest contributions²⁵. Arguably all far more effective in ending the Cold War than any grand strategy aimed at toppling the Soviet empire. This dissertation draws heavily on Wilson's scholarship, and argues that Reagan's deep conflicting impulses precluded the creation of any grand strategy in the early days of his presidency, least of all the adoption of a well-developed strategy toward the Soviet nationalities. On the one hand Reagan felt genuine revulsion towards communism and the

²³ For 'triumphalist' works which place a crusading Ronald Reagan at the heart of an American Cold War victory see, Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Regan Books, 2006); Francis H. Marlo, *Planning Reagan's War: Conservative Strategists and America's Cold War Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012).

²⁴ Works which cast Reagan negatively or downplay his contribution include, Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Did Peace Through Strength Win the Cold War? Lessons from INF", *International Security* 16 (Summer 1991), p162-88; Mark Lagon, *The Reagan Doctrine: Sources of American Conduct in the Cold War's Last Chapter* (Westport: Praeger, 1994); Bob Scheiffer and Gary Paul Gates, *The Acting President* (New York: Dutton, 1994); John Karaagac, *Between Promise and Policy: Ronald Reagan and Conservative Reformism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000); Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Norman A Graebner, Richard Dean Burns and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008).

²⁵ James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

Soviet system, yet on the other hand his abhorrence of nuclear weapons and natural inclination to reach out to the Soviet leadership pressed him in the direction of dialogue. These conflicting impulses played out during the early years of his presidency and can be seen in the apparently haphazard policymaking of 1981-1982, when hard-liners held sway, yet nobody was entirely sure of the president's position.

Reagan's eventual engagement with the Soviets was only possible because of the credibility he held within the conservative movement, as a long-standing man of the right he was able to get away with things that past Republican presidents simply couldn't have. Melvyn Leffler explores this often-overlooked aspect of Reagan's contribution in the excellent *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*. Leffler details how both Reagan's credibility, and his ability to build trust with the Soviet leadership were of vital importance²⁶. This is Reagan's true legacy, and in the rush to portray him as the slayer of the Soviet empire, some writers have obscured Reagan's actual contribution to ending the Cold War conflict, one which is perhaps more praise-worthy. Alan Dobson believes the complexity of Reagan's character is also overlooked in the analysis of his administration, stating, "Reagan emerges as more complex than is often acknowledged and, more important, sensitive to the complexities of the geopolitical environment in which he had to operate. Seen in this light, it becomes apparent why the lenses of ideology, pragmatism, personal loyalty, and management style all demand attention and, when accorded, help to dispel the opacity that so often in the past has made it difficult to read accurately the strategic and policy decision-making of the Reagan Administration"²⁷.

The attempts to undermine Soviet internal cohesion by crafting policies toward the Soviet nationalities form part of this overall narrative, with these efforts in line with the hard-line agenda being pushed in the early years of Reagan's presidency, which was ultimately discarded as Reagan and his closest advisers changed approach in late 1983 and 1984. By this time George Shultz and Jack Matlock were in the ascendency, ably assisted by Bud McFarlane, and the dreams of bringing the Soviet empire down from the inside had been surpassed by a new direction in US Soviet policy. Historians of the Reagan presidency have described this period as marking a course correction, from confrontation to engagement, often believed to have been sparked by Reagan's fears of the fast-escalating tensions with

²⁶ See Melvyn Leffler explores this often-overlooked aspect of Reagan's contribution in, Leffler, Melvyn P. *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2007, p462; and "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most", *Texas National Security Review*, Volume 1, Issue 3 (May 2018).

²⁷ Alan Dobson, "Ronald Reagan's Strategies and Policies: Of Ideology, Pragmatism, Loyalties and Management Style", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27:4, (Dec 2016), p746-765

the Soviets and risk of nuclear war. This view is exemplified by Beth Fisher in “The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War”. Fisher evaluates Soviet policy developments over the course of the Reagan presidency in order to determine whether the massive military build-up and hard-line rhetoric of Reagan’s early years in office had a causal effect on Moscow’s behaviour and strategy and finds little evidence that they did.

Likewise, in “The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War”, James Mann convincingly argues that in order to bring about a negotiated and peaceful end to the Cold War, Reagan actually ignored the advice of his more hard-line advisers in favour of personal outreach and dialogue, something which the president’s Soviet adviser Jack Matlock believes was Reagan’s intention all along ²⁸. Going much further, Hal Brands commends Reagan and his administration for pursuing a consistent and multi-front strategy throughout his time in office, and by making deft adjustments along the way they were able to bring the Soviets to the negotiating table with America firmly in the driving seat. Along with scholars such as John Lewis Gaddis and William Inboden, Brands believes Reagan did pursue a coherent strategy with the goal of winning the Cold War, offering a positive appraisal of Reagan’s strategic thinking without the ‘triumphalism’ of earlier works²⁹. In ‘Making the Unipolar Moment’, Brands offers a robust defence of US foreign policy during the later years of the Cold War, tracing initiatives of the Carter and Reagan administration to the eventual arrival of America’s “unipolar moment” in 1991-1992 ³⁰.

Nevertheless, this dissertation does not set out to address Reagan’s definitive role in the end of the Cold War. However, questions about whether he actually had a grand strategy for defeating the USSR are salient to our understanding of the topic of this work; the Soviet nationalities. Policymaking during the early years of the Reagan presidency was hampered

²⁸ Beth Fisher, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1997); James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (NY, 2009); Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (NY, 2004). For other examples of similar viewpoints see, Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998). A good discussion of the historiography of the different views what role Reagan’s foreign policy played in ending the Cold War can be found in Beth Fischer, ‘Reagan and the Soviets: Winning the Cold War?’ in W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), p. 113-133.

²⁹ See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, Revised Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p342-380, Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014, p102-104 and William Inboden, “Grand Strategy and Petty Squabbles: The Paradox and Lessons of the Reagan NSC”, in Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, Eds., *The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p151-170.

³⁰ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: US Foreign policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016)

by a chaotic atmosphere in the West Wing and challenged by bitter infighting, with even fellow hard-liners disagreeing on Soviet policy. It was in this atmosphere that Richard Pipes was attempting to dissimulate his ideas, ideas which called for an assault on the internal Soviet system, exploiting weaknesses in the body politic, and identifying the restless Soviet nationalities as the perfect conduit for this goal. The figure of Pipes is important in understanding the ideas discussed in this dissertation, namely the exploitation of Soviet ethnic problems to provoke unrest within the Soviet empire. But it is also crucial not to overplay his importance in the overall arc of Reagan's Soviet policies, as some of the more triumphalist narratives tend to do³¹. In the first two years of the administration he played a significant role as Reagan's Soviet adviser on the NSC, especially during 1982 when he began to brief the president personally, but by the time Pipes left the administration at the end of the year Reagan's own thinking was beginning to evolve in less confrontational ways.

Pipes strongly believed that the Soviet Union was simultaneously more dangerous than in earlier periods of the Cold War yet also less stable and less monolithically unified than many policymakers in the West believed³². Pipes was significant in producing NSDD-32, the first attempt by the administration to articulate a national security strategy, and his ideas are also clearly manifest in NSDD-75 and its focus on promoting internal change within the USSR, but he remained somewhat of an outsider and would go on to lament the apparent softening of the administration's stance toward the USSR after he returned to Harvard³³. Nevertheless, for the focus of this dissertation, and the crafting of a workable policy program toward the Soviet nationalities during 1981 and 1982, Pipes was very much a central figure, despite this endeavour ultimately falling by the wayside by 1984.

The continuing activities of the Nationalities Working Group in the early Reagan years also suggest a desire to force internal change in the Soviet Union through the exploitation of ethnic tensions in continuity with the Carter administration, and a hunger to have this approach adopted as official US policy practice. Ideological framing of American policy towards the Soviet Union was encapsulated in NSDD-75, which called for efforts to move the USSR in a more pluralistic dimension. But as pointed out by Wilson, by spring 1983 the moderating influence of secretary of state George Shultz was beginning to become dominant

³¹ See especially Kengor, *The Crusader*.

³² Pipes, Vixi, p193

³³ Pipes wrote expansively on the weaknesses of the Soviet Union while bemoaning the Reagan administration's apparent softening in its relations with the USSR. With the collapse of the Soviet empire under the weight of economic breakdown, failed reforms, and rampant nationalism, Pipes felt his hard-line approach had been totally vindicated. See, Richard Pipes, "Misinterpreting the Cold War: The Hard-Liners Had It Right", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, Issue 1, (Jan 1, 1995): 154.

within the administration, which in turn led to a more practical framework for guiding Reagan's approach to the Soviets to emerge, one that did not include the targeting of Soviet society and which appealed to the president's growing and long-held desire for dialogue. Shultz was pragmatic, practicing a form of realism which remained attuned to human rights yet mindful of the need for productive negotiations. This dissertation goes further by highlighting that this new direction in both Reagan's attitude and in US-Soviet relations were major factors in the diminishing interest in exploiting the Soviet nationalities within the administration. The recent scholarship, which has emphasised Reagan's deftly changing direction and the growing influence of Schultz and Matlock within the administration, has been influential on the trajectory of this thesis as it helps explain why policies toward the Soviet nationalities fizzled out around 1984.

The policies crafted towards the Soviet nationalities in the early years of the Reagan presidency were geared towards destabilising the Soviet Union from within, applying considerations of regime type to American strategy, and making democracy promotion a key part of US foreign policy. By encouraging the national consciousness of the Soviet ethnic groups, US policymakers hoped this would lead to calls for increased decentralisation of Soviet governance, with more power being extended to the regions and republics in a wave of democratisation. These ideas were not an aberration but sat squarely in the mainstream of an American foreign policy tradition which saw the expansion of liberty across the world as the defining mission of the nation's statecraft, with Thomas Jefferson calling for an "Empire of Liberty" as far back as 1780³⁴.

This impulse was acutely felt in the post-World War II years, but far from merely being an idealist dream which sprang from concepts of American moralism and exceptionalism, democracy promotion is actually rooted in prudent and pragmatic concerns about the creation and maintenance of a stable world order, one which reduces the threat to US interests or security at home and abroad. As G. John Ikenberry remarks, "the American promotion of democracy abroad in the broadest sense...reflects a pragmatic, evolving and sophisticated understanding of how to create a stable international political order and a congenial security environment: what might be called an American "liberal" grand strategy"³⁵. Simply put, democracy promotion was not an altruistic endeavour, but a sober

³⁴ Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 25 December 1780, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-04-02-0295>

³⁵ G. John Ikenberry, "America's Liberal Grand Strategy: Democracy and National Security in the Post-war Era", in Michael Cox, Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, John Ikenberry, Takashi Inoguchi Eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p103

realisation that in an anarchic and dangerous world the more democracies there were in the international system the better it was for American interests. Or as the political scientist Paul D. Miller puts it, “liberal democracy is the outer perimeter of American security”³⁶.

Scholars have long grappled with the waxing and waning of the American mission to democratise the world, but a growing literature has emerged around the subject of democracy promotion during the Cold War, with Robert Pee’s work on the Reagan administration’s policies of democracy promotion most instructive. In “Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration”, Pee argues that democracy promotion became a fundamental pillar of US foreign policy during the 1980s under the influence of anti-communist hard-liners and neoconservatives inside the Reagan administration, and this would have profound consequences for American statecraft in the post-Cold War years. Pee argues “the concept of democracy promotion put forward under Reagan differed from previous attempts to intervene in and shape the political development of foreign countries...Whereas these previous programmes had focused on the projection of democratic ideology or attempts to reform foreign societies by working through sitting governments, the new concept of democracy promotion operationalised under Reagan was focussed on supporting sub-state democratic political forces...in order to create functioning democratic systems from the bottom up”³⁷.

While Pee does an excellent job of assessing how democracy promoting policies became a central plank of US foreign policy under Reagan, he mainly focuses on the support for political parties, trade unions and business groups using American government supported non-state organisations such as the National Endowment for Democracy, and remains silent on the support for ethnic and nationality groups inside the Soviet Union as a way of moving the USSR in a decentralising direction. These policies were very much part of the hard-line agenda of the very early years of the Reagan administration designed to promote greater pluralism within the USSR, as this dissertation will show. While much ink has been spilled

³⁶ Paul D Miller, *American Power and Liberal Order: A Conservative Internationalist Grand Strategy* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), p17. Scholars from across the political spectrum have pointed out the reality of the US search for security and foreign markets has very often violated these lofty ideals.

³⁷ Robert Pee, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), p3. For further works on democracy promotion and Reagan’s foreign policy see Pee’s edited volume, Robert Pee and William Michael Schidli eds., *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and the Transition to Democracy Promotion* (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018). Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and the Politics of Global Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) explores the ideas underpinning the National Endowment for Democracy.

determining Reagan's strategy and democracy promotion, none of these works specifically address the subject of US policy towards the Soviet nationalities, and this dissertation will fill this gap.

There has been very little research explicitly on US policy toward the Soviet nationalities during the late Cold War period. Perhaps the only article length work on this topic is Artem Kalinovsky's "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennisen school, and the Crisis of Détente", in which he offers an exploration of the ideas of the academic Alexandre Bennisen and their impact on US foreign policy, ideas which were geared towards exploiting tensions among Soviet Muslims³⁸. Kalinovsky's excellent work details the influence of Bennisen on Paul Henze in the Carter administration and explains that these concepts carried through to the Reagan administration. This thesis will build on Kalinovsky's research and expand it greatly, offering a detailed exploration of US policies towards the Soviet nationalities and the individuals who crafted them. Kalinovsky focuses largely on the role of Bennisen and Henze, whereas this dissertation places Brzezinski at the heart of the story and goes much further in developing the topic. His article offers a brief and very useful foray into this subject, and this thesis will build a much fuller and in-depth study of both the Carter and Reagan administrations and their approaches to the Soviet nationalities.

Taras Kuzio's article, "US Support for Ukraine's Liberation during the Cold War: A Study of Prolog Research and Publishing Corporation" also offers an interesting discussion on these themes³⁹. Now a university professor and Ukraine expert, during the Cold War Kuzio was an Ukrainian émigré activist who was actively involved in covert book smuggling programs and promoting the cause of Ukrainian freedom. As such, his recollections are quite fascinating, and in this article Kuzio briefly describes the steps which the US government took toward the Soviet nationalities over the course of the Cold War. Kuzio's insights regarding Jimmy Carter's support for covert activities toward the Soviet nationalities were most illuminating, and this thesis has taken this theme and explored it further. Like Kalinovsky, Kuzio doesn't offer many comments on the role of Brzezinski and Pipes in these endeavours. This thesis has thus explored their roles in more detail, revealing them to be the main protagonists in calling for an increased focus on the Soviet nationalities as a potential weakness inside the USSR which the US should exploit. There has been very little else written specifically

³⁸ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennisen school, and the crisis of détente," in *Reassessing Orientalism: Interlocking Orientologies during the Cold War*, ed. Michael Kemper and Artemy. Kalinovsky (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), p211

³⁹ Taras Kuzio, "US Support for Ukraine's Liberation during the Cold War: A Study of Prolog Research and Publishing Corporation", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* xxx (2012).

addressing this topic, which as a historian can be both a blessing and a curse. As such, with the increased availability of primary sources and growing literature on the period, this thesis fills an important gap in the scholarship and allows a fuller picture of US strategic thinking toward the USSR to emerge.

This dissertation will be divided into two parts, the first exploring the Carter years, and the second a study of the Reagan administration. The recent upsurge in excellent scholarship on the upheavals and changes in the international system of the 1970s has improved our understanding of this period immensely, opening up bountiful new vistas for research. The first part of this dissertation takes place during the Carter presidency, when the effects of these systemic convulsions were beginning to ripple through US foreign policy. President Carter arrived in Washington promising a new approach to American foreign relations, one less focused on the bipolar superpower competition of the Cold War and more focused on integrating human rights and North-South relations into US foreign policy. Along with these idealistic hopes for a transcendent foreign policy there also stood the figure of Zbigniew Brzezinski; intellectual, anti-Soviet hawk, and a Cold Warrior to his marrow.

Despite playing an outsized role in American foreign relations discourse for many decades, Brzezinski has only recently become the focus of historical study himself. This dissertation describes the attempts by US policymakers to create workable policies toward the Soviet nationalities, with the goal of undermining internal Soviet legitimacy and stifling Soviet foreign policy activism, and Brzezinski was very much the driving force behind this endeavour within the Carter administration. This dissertation will build on this growing Brzezinski research by placing the national security adviser at the heart of this enterprise. It was Brzezinski's long-standing ideas and the force of his personality which dragged this issue from the periphery of US policy to somewhere closer to the centre, at least for a while. The US foreign policy establishment stood largely against this development, for all manner of reasons, but Brzezinski set the course for exploring Soviet weaknesses and desired to see the US take more of an active interest in the ethnic and minority groups of the USSR. He returned ideology to the American approach to the Soviet Union in forceful ways, with ideas about the nature of the Soviet regime and the latent power of nationalism animating his vision of the US-Soviet relationship.

This cause was taken up by similarly minded individuals inside the administration, such as Sam Huntington and William Odom, but most notably NSC staffer Paul Henze, whose zeal and personal commitment to this project were really quite remarkable. Henze drew

inspiration from Brzezinski's early promptings and shouldered the responsibility of transferring these ideas into concrete policy proposals, overseeing the day-to-day application of these policies. Henze gathered a core group of policymakers into the newly formed Nationalities Working Group which provided a regular forum for discussion, presenting research, and drafting policy proposals on the Soviet nationalities. Nevertheless, he found it increasingly difficult to navigate the budgetary, institutional and bureaucratic hurdles thrown up in opposition to his plans, and by the time Carter's presidency came to an end he was left to lament the administration's inability to do more. This thesis follows the delineations of Brzezinski and Henze's attempts to integrate the Soviet nationalities into wider US Cold War strategy, attempts which were stimulated by the closing stages of the *détente* era and a shift in the dynamics of the US-Soviet relationship. This led to an increased focus on the internal workings of the Soviet Union by American policymakers and a renewed desire to exploit the weaknesses of their adversary. By exploring these aspects of the Carter administration's Soviet policy, this dissertation will add to our knowledge of US foreign policy during a pivotal period of the Cold War.

Part two of this dissertation mirrors part one, in that it centres on both the formidable individuals who desired to see the US government pay more attention to the Soviet nationalities, and the wider groups within the foreign policy establishment which convened in order to craft concrete policy proposals to this end. Part two covers the period 1981 to 1984 and reveals the continuities between hard-liners in the Carter administration and the incoming Reagan administration, and outlines the steps taken within the Reagan administration to include consideration of the Soviet nationalities problem when crafting a new policy towards the Soviet Union, and how this ultimately played out. The first section of part two is largely centred on the figure of Richard Pipes, the Harvard academic and Russian history professor who was on secondment to the White House for the first two years of Reagan's presidency, and who held a desire to fundamentally attack the internal legitimacy of the USSR, not only continuing the nascent US policies towards the nationalities first developed during the Carter administration, but pushing for them to be expanded and enshrined at the heart of the Reagan administration's Soviet strategy. Pipes was an anti-communist *par excellence*, who viewed the ethnic divisions of the Soviet empire as an inherent weakness, and who shared Brzezinski and Henze's enthusiasm for reaching and agitating the Soviet nationalities with the express aim of disrupting social cohesion inside the USSR.

These beliefs meshed perfectly with the overall aims of the Reagan administration, which took a far closer interest in the internal dynamics of their Soviet enemy and set about crafting a new approach to US-Soviet relations which explicitly aimed to move the USSR in a more pluralistic and decentralised direction, within the limited leverage available to US strategists. Officials in the early Reagan administration, taking their lead from the president, placed far more emphasis on the role of ideology in statecraft, and gleefully proclaimed the superiority of American values over the communism of the Soviet bloc. From his position as Soviet expert on the NSC, Pipes pushed for efforts to be made to exploit the restlessness of the Soviet nationalities as part of Reagan's foreign policy, and he wasn't the only official doing so. The early Reagan White House was full of anti-communist hard-liners, sympathetic to the concept of assaulting the internal legitimacy of the USSR, and eager to exploit the Soviet nationalities to that end. This attitude found support across various agencies, with Henze's interagency Nationalities Working Group revived for the Reagan era, where ideas began to formulate which would shape serious policy proposals specifically aimed at the nationality groups of the Soviet empire. However, this project wasn't merely about exploiting Soviet weaknesses. There was a lack of understanding and expertise in this field prevalent throughout the US government, and even moderates such as Jack Matlock supported the goals of the NWG in raising awareness and research of Soviet nationality issues within the American foreign policy establishment.

In the frenzied and cut-throat atmosphere of the early Reagan White House it was difficult to craft a coherent strategy toward the Soviet Union, with backstabbing and staff turnover the norm, a president who was often less than equivocal in his decision-making and torn between conflicting impulses, while the tensions prevalent in US-Soviet relationship were escalating at an alarming rate. Reagan was also torn between conflicting impulses which stifled the early development of a coherent grand strategy. And even once the adoption of NSDD-75 appeared to provide a roadmap for such a strategy and to facilitate a determined and deliberate set of policies toward the Soviet nationalities, these notions were already being quietly side-lined by Shultz and his own agenda for engagement with the Soviet Union, which would come to unofficially supersede the more hawkish NSDD-75 by 1984. This development, along with the departure of hard-liners such as Pipes and Clark and fears over the president's image ahead of the 1984 election, left those pushing a harder line toward the Soviet nationalities on the side-lines, destined never to play more than a peripheral role in formulating US Cold War strategy.

This dissertation hopes to contribute to the literature on the later years of the Cold War and the transitional period between Carter and Reagan. It will also contribute to a re-assessment of Carter's foreign policy, specifically toward the Soviet Union. This thesis will reveal that the strategy of the Carter administration was more nuanced and hard-line than has been previously recognised, and the Soviet nationalities were an important aspect of this approach. Likewise, there has been much scholarship on Reagan's desire to promote pluralism and change within the Soviet Union, yet there has been little attention given to policies designed to encourage nationalism within the Soviet system, and thus this dissertation specifically addresses that gap.

This thesis explores US strategic thinking during a crucial part of the Cold War timeline, it dives into American attempts to promote change from within the USSR by exploiting Soviet ethnic tensions, and yet more broadly speaking this dissertation is about the role of ideas and ideology in foreign policy and the power of personality in driving policy initiatives. These ideas had specific objectives in mind, they were designed to halt Soviet adventurism abroad through the manipulation of the Soviet nationalities, perhaps leading the Soviet authorities to turn inward and less likely to pursue an activist policy in the Third World and elsewhere. US officials hoped to promote greater pluralism, decentralisation, and democratisation within the Soviet system, with the Soviet minority groups becoming the vanguard of internal change. Ultimately, these concepts never entirely found a secure foothold within the American foreign policymaking establishment, and despite the Soviet Union's eventual disintegration amidst the nationalist fury of 1991, US efforts played no part in this at all. Ideas matter and individual worldviews matter, but as this dissertation will show, the transference of ideas into concrete policy is often imperfect.

The Stirring of the Nationalities

The 1970s were not a kind decade to the United States; détente was beginning to fray, the Soviet Union grew bolder, and the perception of America as a declining power permeated many capital cities across the world, particularly Moscow. The economy was wobbling, the government appeared rudderless, and the tides of history no longer seemed to be rolling America's way. Rocked by the futile brutality of the Vietnam War, the radicalism of the 1960s, and a political scandal which had brought down a president, American society exuded a palpable sense of disquiet, and a period of national soul searching began in earnest. Nowhere was this malaise more evident than in US foreign policy, as policymakers struggled to adjust to a changing world, and the old Soviet adversary across the Iron Curtain appeared utterly ascendant.

In 1976 the people of the United States decided Georgia governor Jimmy Carter was the man to step into this milieu and bring a fresh sense of morality, direction, and purpose to America, both home and abroad. Idealistic, smart, and full of energy, Carter arrived in Washington and immediately set about the task. He promised American foreign policy would shine a new light on human rights, while also pledging to transcend stale Cold War mindsets and allow America to focus on issues other than superpower confrontation. However, it wouldn't be so easy. Far from being over, the Cold War was entering a new and more confrontational phase, and hawks within his administration were already plotting ways to undermine their old communist foe. The fortunes of the USSR appeared to be soaring, but a little over 14 years later the Soviet empire would no longer even exist, brought down by economic rot, failed political reforms, and the ferocious force of nationalism. And it was this latter issue which had caught the eye of certain US policymakers, as Carter took office.

US-Soviet relations in 1977

In the immediate post-war years, the United States stood as the world's sole superpower, the great institution-builders of the Truman era had reshaped the international system through the creation of a series of overlapping multilateral economic, political and security organisations such as NATO, the World Bank and the UN. These arrangements were buttressed by American military strength and allowed the United States to project power

across much of the globe in ways which were previously unthinkable⁴⁰. By underwriting these institutions, the United States had firmly anchored itself to the European continent and assumed a hegemonic leadership role the likes of which the world had never seen before. This system also provided the framework for the US policy of ‘containment’, designed to inhibit the Soviet Union’s ability to enact its own vision of world order based on communist ideology and backed up by Soviet hard power. This was a massive undertaking which relied upon the ongoing and long-term superiority of American economic and military power over its Soviet rival. This preponderance of US power laid the foundations for what has come to be known as the liberal international order, yet in the 1970s this order looked increasingly precarious. The world of the 1970’s was very different to that of the 1940s.

When Jimmy Carter took office in 1977, the balance of power in the Cold War appeared to have shifted in the USSR’s favour. The aftershocks of Vietnam continued to reverberate throughout American society, provoking a moral crisis and period of national self-reflection. Washington’s primacy was no longer being taken for granted by its allies, with serious doubts emerging among NATO members as to the reliability of American leadership. The once formidable US economy, the source of America’s ability to act as global hegemon, was becoming increasingly vulnerable, crippled by the oil shocks of the early 70’s and rampant stagflation. American financial supremacy was not just being challenged by the powerhouse economies of Western Europe, but also across the developing world. Not only was the Third World becoming increasingly restive and resistant to US authority, it was also becoming more open to Soviet overtures. As waves of Marxist revolutions washed over these regions, the Kremlin ably supported many of the communist insurgencies with arms, supplies, and even troops⁴¹. There was a feeling within the Kremlin’s walls that history was finally moving their way. As American influence shrank, Soviet assertiveness grew. The USSR had engaged in a prolonged military build-up over the course of the decade, its economy had grown in size largely due to its oil output, and under Leonid Brezhnev it was enjoying arguably the first period of real political stability in Soviet history. However, on closer inspection, things were not so clear-cut.

Regardless of the bullishness of the Soviet leadership, by the late 1970’s the Soviet Union had entered the downward spiral which would only end with its complete dissolution a little

⁴⁰ Melvyn Leffler’s work remains the classic text exploring this period. See Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁴¹ For a fantastic exploration of the global Cold War and its impact on the developing world see, Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

over a decade later. Despite closing the gap on the United States, the USSR's economy still lagged behind its superpower rival, and the rot had already set in. As political scientists William Wohlforth and Stephen Brooks have demonstrated, relative to the United States the GDP of the Soviet Union had already peaked around 1970, declining ever since⁴². Economic growth had slowed enormously over the course of the 1970s and showed no sign of abating⁴³. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership class, beginning with Brezhnev himself, was aging and widely perceived as corrupt and utterly stagnant. Internally the Soviet system was listless, dysfunctional, and uncreative. This lethargy was also evident across the Soviet client states of Eastern Europe, who found themselves almost completely reliant on Western loans and drowning in insurmountable debt. Population unrest was intensifying, workers strikes becoming more frequent, and dissidence growing. Party bosses in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe felt compelled to resort to repressive measures to quell these disturbances, only deepening the resentment of the populace. Thus, despite displaying self-assuredness on the world stage and prosecuting an activist foreign policy around the globe, the Soviet Union had already begun to decay.

For all the United States' problems, and they were real problems, it remained the world's preeminent power, with an open political system which secured the rights of its citizens, a robust military, intact alliances, and the capacity for technological innovation which could jumpstart the economy. By contrast, the Soviet Union was sustained by a repressive and authoritarian political system, a stagnating economy and leadership, supporting the debt-ridden baggage of its East European client states⁴⁴. By the time the Carter administration took the reins in Washington, the cracks were beginning to show in the Soviet façade. One such crack, which would eventually become a chasm, was the long-simmering nationalities problem within the non-Russian republics of the USSR. This nationalism, often tied to religious sentiment, had plagued the Soviet empire, waxing and waning, for the duration of its existence. The Soviet economy and leadership may have been moribund, but there was energy growing outside the structures of power. The Soviet system was inert, but as Hal Brands describes, "what dynamism existed was increasingly orientated *against* the state, as a diverse group of dissidents - religious believers, political activists, nationalists who sought

⁴² Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, "Power, Globalisation and the End of the Cold War: Re-evaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas", *International Security* 25, no 3 (2000/2001), p21.

⁴³ For detailed studies of the economic problems which would eventually topple the Soviet system see, Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016)

⁴⁴ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: US Foreign policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016, p29

greater autonomy for their respective republics, and others - became more assertive in critiquing the regime"⁴⁵. And officials in Washington were beginning to take notice.

The purpose of part one of this dissertation is to examine the elements within the United States government which were tentatively beginning to monitor the long-standing Soviet nationalities problem during the early part of Jimmy Carter's term in office and assessing ways in which they could potentially exploit or harness this unrest to serve US Cold War interests. It will demonstrate that this issue, long ignored or dismissed by American policymakers in previous administrations during the 1960's and 1970's, gained some traction among more hawkish members of Carter's administration and the US intelligence community, centred around national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski who was the driving force behind these ideas. Indeed, the section of the thesis will focus largely on Brzezinski, his ideas, and his attempts to transmit this vision into policies which would help reshape US foreign policy towards the USSR. Many members of the foreign policy establishment, including more moderate members of Carter's cabinet such as secretary of state Cyrus Vance, were content to keep the framework of *détente* in place in order to keep a lid on any simmering Cold War tensions and create the space needed for Carter to pursue transformative foreign policy goals such as arms reduction, and global human rights and democracy promotion. Yet there remained ardent anti-communist hard-liners within the administration, no less than the president's national security advisor himself, who wished to take full advantage of any of the Soviet Union's internal weaknesses for the purpose of heightening those tensions and promoting systemic change from within.

This section of the thesis will begin by briefly outlining the vision Jimmy Carter had for American foreign policy, the massive disruptions in the international system he faced during the late 1970s, and his desire to move away from a solely traditional view of US-Soviet Cold War rivalry. It will then begin to focus on Brzezinski, the intellectual, strategist and Soviet specialist, who stood tall over the administration's foreign policy for the duration of Carter's time in office. This work will explore his ideas on the Soviet nationalities, and the transformative vision he had of *détente*, which differed starkly from more dovish elements in the US government. This section will look at the early attempts to include the Soviet nationalities in US Cold War strategic planning, in the context of the overall US-Soviet relationship. In order to do this, Brzezinski and other members of the National Security Council first had to gather reliable intelligence on the current nature of the problems facing the Soviet leadership within the non-Russian republics, before considering how that

⁴⁵ Ibid, p31

information could best be utilised. This part of the dissertation will reveal that hard-line individuals on the NSC were eager to turn Brzezinski's ideas on the Soviet nationalities into coherent policy options, with some, such as Paul Henze, making it an almost single-minded obsession. Henze was the focal point of a group of officials inside the administration who were keen to exploit Soviet internal weaknesses, and who began to seriously think about ways in which this could be done. Ultimately, these endeavours were never entirely accepted as part of mainstream American foreign policy thinking, but they did demonstrate the more ideological thrust which entered US Cold War strategy as the 1970s drew to a close, laying the groundwork for an increased focus on the internal nature of the Soviet regime which would continue into the Reagan years.

Jimmy Carter, human rights, and the 1970s

When Jimmy Carter was elected 39th president of the United States in 1976, he was eager to effect a change of dynamics in US-Soviet relations. The former peanut farmer from Georgia arrived in Washington as the consummate outsider, promising to return a sense of morality and direction to the American body politic after the pain of Vietnam and the scandals of Watergate⁴⁶. Carter was a devout born-again Christian, and alongside his strong religious faith and political idealism, he had internalised the struggle for human rights in the crucible of the civil rights-era Deep South, making it one of the guiding principles of his life⁴⁷. And he was determined to infuse American foreign policy with the values he himself held so dear, values which he believed the rest of the world to be highly susceptible to. In his Inaugural Address, Carter declared, "The passion for freedom is on the rise. Tapping this new spirit, there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane... We are a purely idealistic nation, but let no one confuse our idealism with weakness. Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our

⁴⁶ For useful profiles of Jimmy Carter, see Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2009) and Julian E. Zelizer, *Jimmy Carter: The American Presidents Series: The 39th President, 1977-1981* (New York: Henry Holt Books, 2010). For a recent revisionist take see, Stuart E. Eizenstat, *President Carter: The White House Years* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2018).

⁴⁷ For Carter in his own words, on his faith, his life, his worldview, and his reflections on his time in office, see his memoirs, Jimmy Carter, *Turning Point: A Candidate, a State, and a Nation Come of Age* (New York: Crown, 1992), Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995) and Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010). Carter has become a prolific author and activist during his post-presidency years.

moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for these societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights”⁴⁸.

Such visionary rhetoric had been missing from American foreign policy in recent years but sat squarely in the tradition of American Wilsonianism, an idealism and commitment to universal freedom which was at the very core of America’s national identity. Speaking in May 1977 at the University of Notre Dame, Jimmy Carter laid out his vision for a new American approach to foreign policy that would transcend Cold War bipolarity and place human rights and dignity at the centre of his administration’s strategy. “I want to speak today about the strands that connect our actions overseas with our essential character as a nation. I believe we can have a foreign policy that is democratic, that is based on our fundamental values and that uses power and influence for humane purposes. We can also have a foreign policy that the American people both support and understand”⁴⁹. It was this sense of unbridled idealism and ambition which animated Carter and bound him to shaping American statecraft in ways which would serve not just the American national interest, but the entire world.

Nevertheless, as Nancy Mitchell’s work has shown, despite his true commitment to human rights and fostering a better world, Carter remained a “Cold Warrior from day one”. His worldview may have been infused with idealism, but he was under no illusions as to the nature of the Soviet threat, or the complexities of the Cold War. Mitchell believes that most observers misunderstood Carter’s deep Cold War instincts, his demeanour and choice of language leading them to believe he was solely focused on morality over interests. She believes Carter’s religiosity contributed to the misconception, saying, “he was a profoundly religious man...His Christian faith was at the core of his being. This religiosity coalesced with his interest in human rights and created a powerful, distorting filter: Carter would mention a dozen times in a speech that the United States needed to maintain its strength, and, as an aside, that it should also promote human rights, but what people heard and what the press reported was that Carter had mounted a spirited defence of human rights. Whenever Carter referred to morality, values, or human rights, it was heard at full volume, while his comments about strength and national interest were heard as whispers and forgotten”.

⁴⁸ Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter, January 20, 1977, Selected Speeches of Jimmy Carter, Digital Jimmy Carter Library (hereafter DJCL).

<https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/inaugadd.phtml>

⁴⁹ “Text of President’s Commencement Address on Foreign Policy”, *New York Times*, May 23, 1977.

For Carter, his idealism was not incompatible with the realism of power politics, and America needed to be good if it were to remain powerful. There is no doubt that Carter wished to see America pursue a different kind of foreign policy, one infused with morality and the promotion of human rights. Yet he never lost sight of the true nature of superpower competition with the Soviet Union, a reality which left him open to the ideas of Brzezinski and others who wished to exploit the internal contradictions of the USSR. As Mitchell says, “the logic of Carter’s Cold War policy could be counterintuitive: he would fight communism more effectively by not being so obsessed with fighting communism. Instead of turning away from the Cold War, however, Carter was waging a more complex, pre-emptive, and diffuse Cold War”⁵⁰.

On assuming the presidency, Carter had little experience in foreign policy. The experience he did have was gained through his involvement in the Trilateral Commission, an elitist think tank founded by David Rockefeller which brought together private citizens, businesspeople and politicians from North America, Europe and Japan to discuss global events. Carter was invited to join in 1973, and immediately threw himself into reading policy papers on economics and the world’s energy sector. Hamilton Jordan, Carter’s future White House Chief of Staff, recalled Carter describing his experiences thus, “those Trilateral Commission meetings for me were like classes in foreign policy - reading papers produced on every conceivable subject, hearing experienced leaders debate international issues and problems”⁵¹. The Commission included bipartisan membership, with both Democrats and Republicans involved, and drew on experts from a wide array of fields. The exposure was vital to Carter’s understanding of foreign policy and how the world worked, allowing him to rub shoulders with figures such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance and Harold Brown, who would enter government service and fill key roles in the Carter White House. Indeed, over twenty members of the Commission went on to serve in Carter’s administration⁵². Despite his limited exposure to international affairs, Carter came to the presidency with an ambitious desire to reshape the US role in the world, recalibrate America’s relationship with the Soviet Union, and implement a foreign policy which placed a high emphasis on human rights promotion while also tackling the emerging problems of a globalising world⁵³.

⁵⁰ Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), p8-10

⁵¹ Hamilton Jordan quoted in W. Carl Biven, *Jimmy Carter’s Economy: Policy in an Age of Limits* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p18.

⁵² Ibid p17-18

⁵³ Studies of the Carter administration’s foreign policy see Scott Kaufman, *Plans Unravelling: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008). For a more balanced work see Olav Njølstad’s chapter, “The Carter Legacy: Entering the Second Era of the Cold War”, *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to*

Despite being critical of the Soviet Union from the earliest days of his presidency and understanding the true nature of superpower contest, Carter no longer believed that the Cold War was the only lens through which to view the problems facing the world and so American foreign policy should adjust accordingly⁵⁴. Carter's presidency, wedged between the détente years of the high Cold War and the final decade of the Soviet Union's existence, came during a tumultuous period of upheaval in the international system. On assuming office in January 1977, Carter had to contend with a series of unique challenges unlike any faced by a previous incoming president. America was perceived to be in decline, domestic pressure to revive the stuttering American economy was immense, the new commander-in-chief looked out from his vantage point in Washington and saw a world in ferment. New forces of globalisation and de-colonisation were sweeping the planet, and an assertive Soviet Union appeared to be on the march in the Third World.

In his first letter to the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Carter declared his hopes for an improved working relationship, "I want to confirm that my aim is to improve relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of reciprocity, mutual respect and advantage. I will pay close personal attention to this goal, as will Secretary of State Vance. I read your public statements with great interest and they make me believe that we share a common aspiration for strengthening and preserving the perspectives for stable peace"⁵⁵. In his reply the Soviet leader also expressed his wishes for a productive relationship but took the opportunity to remind Carter of the Soviet Union's antipathy towards attempts to interfere in their internal affairs. Brezhnev was emphatic, "with this, and only this approach from both sides... can a stable, progressive development of relations between the USSR and the USA"⁵⁶. Carter's commitment to highlighting human rights violations deeply troubled the Soviet leadership. Throughout his time in office, the USSR would continue to probe for weaknesses in the West's resolve, testing Carter by actively pursuing Soviet interests around the world and

Conflict Resolution, ed. by Olav Njølstad (London: Frankl Cass, 2004), Donna R. Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa: Cold War Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2007); Brian J. Auten, *Carter's Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2008); Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

⁵⁴ Alan M. Taylor, "The Global 1970's and the Echo of the Great Depression", in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, Daniel J. Sargent (eds), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970's in Perspective* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010), chapter 5, p215

⁵⁵ "Letter, President Carter to Secretary Brezhnev," January 26, 1977, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Russian Foreign Ministry archives, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112019>

⁵⁶ "Letter, Secretary Brezhnev to President Carter," February 04, 1977, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Russian Foreign Ministry archives, Moscow, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112017>

continuing to violate human rights at home, while SALT-II negotiations rumbled on. Washington policymakers perceived an aggressive and unchained Soviet Union on the march across the developing world, an image which endured and finally culminated in the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, which sent shockwaves through Western capitals. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union was not the behemoth it appeared.

The 1970's marked a period of profound change in the nature of the international system; shifting economic forces leading to increased globalisation, technological innovation, rising nationalism and demands for self-determination across the Third World, the growth of the dissident movement in the Soviet bloc, and an emerging Western focus on global human rights. Long portrayed as a mere scene-setter for the Cold War's dramatic climax, recent historiography has brought the 1970's to life, with historians now depicting the decade as one of deep transformation in the international system with far-reaching implications for American foreign policy and US-Soviet relations⁵⁷. Indeed, some historians of US foreign relations have argued that the deep structural changes rocking the international system during the 1970s, and the strategies enacted by US policymakers to take advantage of those forces over the following years, led directly to the post-Cold War 'unipolar moment' when America stood at the apex of its power⁵⁸. Nevertheless, US policymakers throughout the 1970s had struggled to come to grips with the new forces buffeting American power and prestige at the time, with former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor describing the period in his memoirs as "years of upheaval"⁵⁹.

One such force was the nationalism which began to emerge across the developing world, as people threw off the shackles of their colonial oppressors and asserted their right to self-determination. Alongside this Third World nationalism similar sentiments were rising among the peoples of both the Soviet bloc nations of Eastern Europe and within the republics of the Soviet Union itself. Over the next decade this growing nationalism, often accompanied by religious fervency, would continue to smoulder until eventually it would engulf the USSR

⁵⁷ The best works in this genre are, Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, Daniel J. Sargent (eds), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970's in Perspective* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010); Barbara Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970's* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵⁸ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: US Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016). The term 'unipolar moment' was first used by neoconservative intellectual Charles Krauthammer in a 1990 special issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

⁵⁹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (London: Phoenix Press, 1982).

entirely⁶⁰. Increasingly, Western-based human rights NGO's, churches and émigré groups highlighted the plight of their compatriots and co-religionists in the Soviet bloc, riding a wave of human rights activism which emerged in the mid 1970s on the back of the Helsinki accords⁶¹. The signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 had prised open the Soviet system, allowing Western activists and governments to peer inside for the first time. The Soviet sphere had long been out of bounds to human rights organisations, who had focused their attention on violations in the developing world. But with Helsinki all this had changed, and the West was now able to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the repression taking place within Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself⁶². And the Soviets did not enjoy the exposure.

Despite preserving policies of containment, the president himself also wished to see the US-Soviet relationship somewhat downgraded as the primary focus of US foreign policy, with an expanding emphasis placed on the challenges facing an increasingly globalised and connected world. Daniel Sargent argues that Carter was prescient in understanding the new currents in international politics and the challenges which would face policymakers in the future, but he was premature in his desire to implement a post-Cold War foreign policy before the Cold War was actually over⁶³. The world was most certainly moving in new directions, with a plethora of non-state actors and transnational networks emerging, a self-assurance taking hold in the Global South and decolonisation continuing apace, and therefore Carter was right to highlight the importance of North-South relations and human rights. But the Cold War was far from over, and the looming presence of the Soviet Union still cast its shadow over American foreign policy.

Indeed, the Soviet leadership had reacted with dismay to Carter's rhetoric on human rights and his vocal support for high profile dissidents across the Soviet bloc such as Aleksandr Ginzburg and Andrei Sakharov. US embassy officials in Moscow were clearly unnerved by what they were seeing inside the Soviet Union with regards to the Soviet response to Carter's change of tact, as authorities there began a renewed crackdown on dissidents. A February

⁶⁰ For the best works on this topic see, Ronald G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p8.

⁶² Kalinovski, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennisen school, and the crisis of détente," p219

⁶³ Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p262.

1977 cable from the Moscow embassy to the State Department in Washington counselled, “rightly or wrongly, the Soviets see the human rights movement here as a direct challenge to their system and its image abroad, they also regard the USG’s public endorsement of the dissidents as blatant, impermissible interference in their internal affairs”. The embassy speculated that this new approach from the president and the resultant Soviet crackdown could seriously damage the US-Soviet relationship, believing the hard-line Soviet response could, “in turn inflame emotions in the US to the point of setting back the timetable for resolving major items on the US-Soviet agenda”⁶⁴.

With US-Soviet relations becoming strained ahead of upcoming arms talks, Carter’s press secretary Jody Powell, one of the Georgia liberals who had stood with Carter from the beginning of his presidential campaign, suggested to the president that he should reach out informally by phone to the Soviets and try to explain his position. Powell believed it was necessary to build domestic support for arms control talks and that that the American people would no longer support a foreign policy bereft of idealism and a commitment to human rights, as it had been under Nixon. Brzezinski dismissed this idea, believing that it “smacks too much of cynicism and of weakness”⁶⁵. It was noted within the administration that the clamp down on dissidents had predated Carter’s election win, connected to both food shortages in the USSR and fears among the Soviet leadership that the Basket III provisions of the Helsinki accords would serve as a rallying point for Soviet dissidents. Yet it was also accepted that the new public stance of the American government in support of dissidents and human rights had “reinforced and intensified” the Soviet crackdown⁶⁶. US officials continued to monitor the Soviet reaction to Carter’s human rights policies during the first year of the administration, noting increased Soviet propaganda which blamed Carter for recent international criticism of the Soviet system and denouncing the president’s “demagoguery” on human rights, and also observing the link between US policies and the Soviets “turning the screws” on domestic critics of the regime⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ “Human Rights in the Soviet Union: Where do we go from here?”, Cable US Embassy Moscow to Secretary of State Washington, Department of State, February 1977, Box 78, USSR 1-2/77, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (hereafter JCPL).

⁶⁵ Memo Powell to The President, “Soviet Dissidents”, February 21, 1977, Box 78, USSR 1-2/77, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs. See Brzezinski’s handwritten comments on memo.

⁶⁶ Memo Brzezinski to Vice President Mondale, “Origins of Soviet Campaign Against Dissidents”, July 19, 1977, Box 78, USSR 7/77, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

⁶⁷ CIA report, “Soviet Foreign Policy at the Crossroads”, July 8, 1977, Box 78, 6-78-10. USSR 7/77, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

However, for the more hawkish elements inside the administration, Carter's human rights policies were exactly the kind of ideological spear they felt would be effective in piercing Soviet armour. While there is no doubt that Carter and his liberal advisors were genuinely dedicated to the cause of human rights promotion, no matter how imperfectly that policy was followed, the hard-line anti-communists in the White House were eager to use human rights as a moral weapon with which to bludgeon the Soviets⁶⁸. Along with Brzezinski were fellow hardliners William E. Odom, a three-star military general who has spent his career analysing Soviet military capabilities, and the political scientist and intellectual Samuel Huntington, who joined the administration on academic leave from Harvard. On the National Security Council was Paul B. Henze, who served on the NSC for the duration of Carter's tenure in office and used his time in the White House to push for a more proactive US approach towards the republics and nationalities inside the Soviet Union⁶⁹. These officials began to explore ways to undermine the internal cohesion of the Soviet Union, with human rights and support for national self-determination at the forefront of their minds⁷⁰.

These men also held a view of the nature of détente and the US-Soviet relationship that was fundamentally at odds with the Republican realists of previous administrations and the Democrat moderates and liberals with which they now shared the West Wing. Odom in particular, the career military man, was keen to see the US pushback against Soviet advances around the world and compete across multiple arenas, employing both hard and soft power to do so. As Artemy Kalinovsky describes, "Huntington and Odom argued that the Cold War was entering a new phase that had yet to be defined. In this new phase, containment and détente would no longer be enough. Instead Washington should pursue "competitive engagement" along several fronts, which meant maintaining US military pre-eminence, and challenging the Soviet Union within its own sphere of influence"⁷¹. Brzezinski and his fellow hawks did not believe in American decline. They did not look at the United States and see a nation in retreat. They believed the US was the world's only

⁶⁸ Odom quoted in Olav Njolstad, "The Carter Legacy: Entering the Second Era of the Cold War", *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Resolution*, ed. by Olav Njolstad (London: Frankl Cass, 2004), p179

⁶⁹ Henze's wide ranging NSC portfolio included responsibility for Soviet Nationalities, the Horn of Africa, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

⁷⁰ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen school, and the crisis of détente," in *Reassessing Orientalism: Interlocking Orientologies during the Cold War*, ed. Michael Kemper and Artemy. Kalinovsky (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 211. Kalinovsky's essay on the French intellectual Alexandre Bennigsen and his influence on the Carter administration's interest in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union remains the only work to have begun exploring this aspect of Carter's Soviet strategy.

⁷¹ Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen school, and the crisis of détente," p218

superpower and the USSR was riddled with internal weaknesses and contradictions. As Adam Michnik, the famous Polish dissident and intellectual, opined, “Brzezinski understood what hardly anybody could understand at that time in America - that an ideological confrontation with the Soviet bloc had to be undertaken - and the American slogan in this confrontation should be human rights”⁷².

Brzezinski, the Soviet nationalities, and the return of ideology

Carter may have ascended to the White House vowing to enact a new approach to American foreign policy and with a desire to transcend bipolarity, but some elements within his administration remained locked into a Cold War mindset. Standing astride the foreign policy of the Carter administration was the mercurial figure of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Polish American intellectual chosen by the new president to be his National Security Advisor⁷³. The son of a Polish diplomat and émigré to the United States, ‘Zbig’, as he was known, had been a professor at Columbia University before entering the political arena, carving out a niche for himself within academia as an expert on Eastern Europe and the dynamics within the Soviet bloc⁷⁴. Never quite able to shake the feeling that he was viewed as an outsider by the American foreign policy establishment, this Polish Catholic strategist brought to the White House a carefully considered view of world order and of America’s place within it. He was assured and utterly confident in his own abilities, and his clashes with Cyrus Vance, Jimmy Carter’s secretary of state, have attained almost mythical status. Brzezinski may have been stubborn and volatile, but he was also a supremely intelligent foreign policy practitioner with an in-depth knowledge of the Soviet system who had been at Carter’s side from the beginning of his presidential campaign. Carter had known Brzezinski since their time at the Trilateral Commission, and the president both trusted and held him in high esteem⁷⁵. And while the president had his own deeply-felt worldview and a clear agenda which he wished to accomplish while in office, it was Brzezinski who would largely dominate the policymaking process in the White House.

⁷² Adam Michnik quoted in Vaughan, *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present*, chapter 3, p120

⁷³ Brzezinski’s memoirs offer valuable insight into the policymaking process within the Carter White House. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroud, 1983). His personal papers are housed at the Library of Congress and remain closed until 2022.

⁷⁴ Brzezinski’s influence outlived his stint in the White House, as he advised many future politicians of both parties on foreign policy and authored countless books and articles on grand strategy over the course of his career.

⁷⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977-1981*, Chapter 1

Deeply read in Russian and East European history, Brzezinski was a fervent Cold Warrior and dedicated anti-communist, with a long-standing interest in studying ways to exploit any chinks in the Soviet armour⁷⁶. He held a particular and enduring interest in the internal dynamics of Soviet society and weaknesses in the Soviet system, centred around the disruptive power of nationalism. As a Masters student at McGill University in 1950, Brzezinski had written his thesis on Russo-Soviet nationalism, in which he described the Soviet nationalities problem as the “Achilles Heel” of the USSR⁷⁷. In his thesis, Brzezinski highlighted the conundrum facing the Soviet leadership; to suppress the nationalities would inevitably lead to rising unrest, but to allow them leeway could potentially lead to greater calls for freedom and undermine the unity of the entire USSR. This was a concept which would animate his life, and he advanced these ideas further in a 1960 book on the sources of disunity within the Soviet bloc⁷⁸. ‘The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict’ was published to much acclaim, and the work has held up very well in the light of history. The book specifically identified nationalist sentiment within the Soviet sphere as an inherent weakness, one which the Kremlin would find almost impossible to quell and would lead the region to become increasingly unstable over time. And although the book mainly focused on nationalism within Eastern Europe, it also contained the seeds of Brzezinski’s thought on the Soviet nationalities question as well.

In 1966 he would expand on these thoughts in an article entitled, “The Soviet Political System: Transformation or Degeneration”, a contribution to an edited volume on the problems facing the Soviet leadership in the coming years⁷⁹. This essay argued that the root of decay in the Soviet system would eventually stem not merely from economic problems, although these were important, but from the oppressive political arrangements which institutionalised sterile thinking in leadership and stifled the voices of its citizens. A key development would be the growing assertiveness of the non-Russian nationalities and the traditional ties to localised languages, religion and customs which were held by many Soviet

⁷⁶ See Charles Gati ed., *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) and Justin Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2018) for the best works on Brzezinski available.

⁷⁷ Patrick Vaughan, “Zbigniew Brzezinski and Afghanistan”, in Anna Kasten Nelson ed. *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2009), Chapter 5, p120.

⁷⁸ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1960).

⁷⁹ Zbigniew, K. Brzezinski, “The Soviet Political System: Transformation or Degeneration,” in Zbigniew, K. Brzezinski, ed., *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1969): 1-34.

citizens living in the autonomous republics which constituted the inner Soviet empire. In the concluding essay of the collection, Brzezinski mused, “we still live in an age of nationalism, and my own highly generalized feeling is that it is going to be exceedingly difficult for the Soviet Union to avoid having some of its many nationalities go through a phase of assertive nationalism”, in which case Brzezinski surmised that if the demands for greater autonomy from the various nationality groups were not met then they would become “sharper”, and if they were met then they would “grow with the eating”. “I frankly do not see how the central authorities in the Soviet Union will be able to avoid having a prolonged period of fairly difficult relations with the non-Russian nationalities”⁸⁰. He also felt the Soviet nationalities problem had been completely overlooked by Sovietologists in the West. As Harvard’s Mark Kramer describes, “few Western analysts at the time ascribed much political importance to Soviet nationalities and ethnic groups” whereas Brzezinski “criticised ‘the inclination of many Western scholars of Soviet affairs to minimise what I fear may be a very explosive issue in the Soviet polity’”⁸¹.

By 1977 the period of détente had been in place over the course of three previous US administrations, but Brzezinski’s view of détente fell more in the line with the activist interpretation taken by the Soviet Union⁸². Historian and Brzezinski expert Patrick Vaughan explains, “Brzezinski... was determined from the outset to implement a more “reciprocal” form of détente. Few observers at the time knew what he had in mind. Brzezinski’s version of “détente” he would admit in later years, was designed not only to contain the Soviet Union but also to engineer its demise. This involved an increased effort to promote human rights, support dissidents, and stir up the nationalities - and contest the Soviet Union militarily around the world”. Interestingly, despite Carter’s vocal desire to transcend the bipolarity of the Cold War, Vaughan believes the president was fully on board with Brzezinski’s hawkish strategy, saying, “beginning early in the administration, and going beyond the human rights campaign, Brzezinski initiated, and Carter approved, an unprecedented White House effort to attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet government”⁸³. Brzezinski’s vision of the Cold War was almost purely ideological.

⁸⁰ Brzezinski, “Concluding Reflections”, in *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics*, p160-161

⁸¹ Mark Kramer, “Anticipating the Grand Failure”, *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski*, p44.

⁸² For an excellent exploration of the Soviet interpretation of détente see, Vladislav. M Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For a fine discussion on détente and its legacy see, Thomas A. Schwartz, “Legacies of détente: A three-way discussion”, *Cold War History*, Volume 8, 2008 Issue 4, p513-525. For a primer on differences between the US and European perceptions of détente see, Stephan Kieninger, *Dynamic Détente: The United States and Europe, 1964-1975* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016)

⁸³ Vaughan, *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present*, p120.

As the 1970's drew to a close, the European-style balance of power détente favoured by Nixon, Kissinger and Ford was giving way, and a new era of ideological confrontation was emerging. For the president's new national security advisor, the Soviet nationalities were to provide merely another front in that war. While keen on cultivating new aspects of US Cold War strategy, in the early days of the administration officials also had to wrestle with the contours of the US-Soviet relationship writ large. There were continuing concerns over the Soviet arms build-up, which had been taking place over the course of the 1970s, and debates over whether the Soviets intended to achieve parity with the United States, or to surpass it. Brzezinski speculated with Carter as to whether the driving force behind this build-up was ideological, organisational, or in reaction to American strategy. And he once again gave voice to the ideological and anti-détente component of his thinking stating, "strategically the post-war world has been "unipolar", not "bipolar", because one power has predominated. There has been no "balance of power" but rather a hierarchy of powers". He feared the Soviet Union was using arms limitation talks not merely to achieve nuclear parity, but to undermine and attack the post-war, US led order.

Furthermore, he placed ideology firmly at the heart of Soviet intentions. "It has become popular (if unwise) to dismiss the role of ideology, the political explanation has to rely in part on the Soviet ideological view of the world... De-ideologized pragmatism simply cannot account for the role of ideas in shaping power"⁸⁴. If the Soviet Union's actions on the world stage continued to be driven by ideology, then American statecraft should also draw on ideas and ideals to win this conflict, a concept which had been largely scorned by the realists Nixon and Kissinger earlier in the decade. Brzezinski wished to see American foreign policy infused with a sense of morality again, something for which he criticised previous administrations for neglecting. He believed Nixon and Kissinger had executed a "foreign policy based largely on manoeuvre among the more powerful nation states" and "largely devoid of moral concerns"⁸⁵. Brzezinski's concept of world order was hard to define, in many ways sharing the focus on power and geopolitical rivalry of realism yet placing a greater emphasis on the internal nature of states, the importance of civil society, and ideology.

On taking up the position of national security advisor to President Carter, Brzezinski brought with him a deeply considered worldview and well-established views on the Soviet

⁸⁴ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, drafted by Odom, "Explaining the Soviet Build-up", March 14, 1977, Box 78, USSR 3/77, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

⁸⁵ Michael Cotey Morgan, *The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p223

nationalities problem, which he had been thinking and writing about over the course of his entire career. His position at the summit of American foreign policy now afforded him the platform to explore these ideas and perhaps embed them within US Cold War strategy. Brzezinski began to craft strategies towards the Soviet nationalities which would serve US interests, and in Paul Henze he found a like-minded point man on the NSC. Henze knew Brzezinski from their earlier joint involvement with Radio Free Europe and shared his boss's interest in the Soviet nationalities question, he was keen to see the US government pay more attention to developments in the non-Russian republics of the USSR⁸⁶. Henze recalled that at the beginning of Carter's presidency, "Brzezinski took me aside right away... He simply said "I want you to see what you can do to really get some attention to the non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union. They're important, and they're going to be more important, and we need to have ourselves equipped to do something about them"⁸⁷.

In May 1977, a few months into Carter's term in office, the CIA produced a detailed report on the wide spectrum of dissent which existed within the Soviet Union. The CIA report presented evidence suggesting a "revival of nationalist feelings among the peoples of the USSR which, to varying degrees, has affected all the major ethnic minorities, including the Great Russians". It went on to state, "this nationalist mood is symptomatic of the waning Marxist-Leninist ideological clan and has been fostered by the relative relaxation of the political atmosphere since Stalin's death". The report offered the US intelligence community's best contemporary insights into the nationalist dissidence slowly fermenting across the USSR. At that stage the CIA didn't feel it posed an existential threat to the Soviet regime, yet the potential was there, describing nationalist dissidence as, "by its nature divisive", and capable of "exacerbating old rivalries"⁸⁸. The mention of the 'Great Russians' as a nationality group of interest is in itself noteworthy, a recognition among the intelligence community that the nationalities problems within the Soviet Union went more than just one way, and the majority Russian group also harboured festering resentments of their own.

Brzezinski was also well aware of this dynamic and, following on from the circulation of the CIA report, he explained the issue to the president in a June 1977 memo, including maps and statistics for Carter to peruse. The national security advisor advised Carter that

⁸⁶ Kalinovsky, "Encouraging Resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennisen School, and the Crisis of Détente", p219

⁸⁷ Paul Henze quoted in Vaughan, *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present*, chapter 3, p120

⁸⁸ CIA report, "The Spectrum of Soviet Dissent", May 1977, Box 78, 6-78-8, USSR 4-5/1977, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

“demographic dynamics increasingly point to the Russians becoming a minority in the total population”. He suggested that Russians were well on their way to becoming a minority, for the first time in Russian imperial history. “I believe that this is likely to become an increasingly difficult issue in the Soviet Union. National consciousness is becoming stronger among the non-Russians, and this is not surprising since we still live in the age of nationalism. Moreover, national tensions are likely to affect political change within the Soviet Union”⁸⁹. This interest in the potential clash between ‘Great Russians’ and the non-Russian nationalities also had its roots in Brzezinski’s earliest work and was a major focus of his McGill Masters thesis over two decades previously. As Brzezinski’s biographer Justin Vaisse writes, “on the one hand, the mosaic of nationalities that made up the Soviet Union put its own future at risk by its centripetal movement, as Brzezinski had been explaining for a long time. On the other hand, and precisely for that reason, Great Russian nationalism (with its militaristic tradition) ... would not allow the empire to be destroyed and would not accept pluralism among the non-Russians”⁹⁰. This paradox intrigued Brzezinski, and he wrestled with it. Nevertheless, it was the non-Russian nationalities which would form the central focus of Brzezinski and Henze’s scheming within the administration.

Expanding activities

At Brzezinski’s behest, a review of US covert activities towards the USSR was conducted in May 1977, and the national security advisor was utterly horrified at the paucity of covert actions being undertaken by the CIA, most notably the lack of action towards the ethnic minority groups of the Soviet empire⁹¹. As a result, Henze began to take practical steps towards increasing US government knowledge of nationality issues inside the Soviet Union, and crafting proposals geared towards exploiting these issues for America’s gain. Given his background at Radio Free Europe and experience in radio broadcasting to Eastern Europe, Henze was keen to see an expansion of broadcasting ability to reach the nationalities of the Soviet Union. This desire tied in closely with the overall goal of the Carter administration, among both doves and hawks, to promote human rights within the Soviet sphere of influence.

⁸⁹ Memo Brzezinski to Carter, “Soviet National Problems”, June 3, 1977, Box 78, USSR 6/77, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

⁹⁰ Vaisse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: America’s Grand Strategist*, p237-238

⁹¹ Taras Kuzio, “US Support for Ukraine’s Liberation during the Cold War: A Study of Prolog Research and Publishing Corporation”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* xxx (2012), p8

In May, Carter had instructed the NSC to conduct a review of US human rights policies in order to define what US objectives were in the realm of human rights, identify what courses of action the US could take, and generally craft a coherent strategy for the promotion of human rights as an integral part of American foreign policy⁹². The Special Coordination Committee (SCC) conducted this review meeting which eventually led to directive NSC-28, which clearly and cogently articulated the administration's emerging strategy on human rights promotion. The study which informed this directive stated, "RFE and RL have played a key role in the rising awareness that has accompanied the expanding human rights movement in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Human rights activists in Moscow, Warsaw and other cities frequently cite RFE/RL's extensive coverage as a vital source of information...The Radios also seek to give increased attention to human rights developments affecting the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union"⁹³. The employment of radio broadcasting to reach the nationality groups inside the USSR would form a core component of Brzezinski and Henze's strategy, but one which would not always run smoothly.

By late 1977, a new strategy was emerging within the administration which would see an unprecedented and renewed attempt by the US government to boost clandestine activity within the USSR. In order to reach the nationality groups there would be increased book and samizdat distribution, renewed funding for book publishing, and improved quality of radio broadcasting into the Soviet republics, although these ventures were incredibly slow to materialise⁹⁴. Brzezinski had been pushing for these developments since the earliest days of the administration but had come up against intense resistance from the State Department and elements within the CIA, who questioned the viability and necessity of such measures⁹⁵. Carter and his administration also continued to work on crafting guidance for US foreign policy, and in August 1977 they issued the official directive on national security which would guide US policy over the coming 4 years; Presidential Directive/NSC-18. And while the directive urged US and Soviet co-operation in reducing areas of tension and sought to involve the USSR in constructive global activities, the hardliners who were interested in encouraging national consciousness within the Soviet Union received encouragement by the inclusion of the instruction to "compete politically with the Soviet Union by pursuing the basic American

⁹² Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC-28, "Human Rights", May 20, 1977, Box 17, 5/77-2/78, Bloomfield Subject File, Staff Material, Global Issues, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

⁹³ Study Prepared by the Ad-Hoc Inter-Agency Group on Human Rights and Foreign Assistance, August 15, 1977, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Volume II, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980 (Hereafter FRUS).

⁹⁴ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insiders Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p91

⁹⁵ Ibid, p90-91

commitment to human rights and national independence”⁹⁶. The task then, was to create concrete policies in order to achieve this objective.

In late 1977, Henze complained to Brzezinski that other agencies within the US government were dragging their feet when it came to increasing the level of covert actions which were aimed at the Soviet nationalities, but that finally things appeared to be moving. “Last February, when State expressed reservations about the continuation of CIA’s meagre covert operations directed at the USSR and Eastern Europe, you suggested State study overt possibilities while, meanwhile, CIA consider modest expansion of selected activities. State did nothing. CIA, suffering from internal confusion, was slow to move but during the course of the summer came up with a number of proposals for expansion”⁹⁷. Brzezinski had pushed the CIA to develop new covert approaches to the USSR, in light of the Carter administration’s enlarged view of the Soviet relationship, which would include highlighting the plight of dissidents and human rights abuses within the Soviet republics⁹⁸.

Nevertheless, Henze felt that the State Department still wasn’t on board with the new approach, bemoaning their “profound lack of enthusiasm”. He told Brzezinski, “State...is doing a review of what policies towards nationalities should be... I hear that State feels that nothing should be done in respect to non-Russian nationalities at all. But it remains to be seen whether they will take this negative a position formally”⁹⁹. The State Department had long been more supportive of the détente process and reluctant to needlessly antagonise the Soviet Union. The situation wasn’t helped by Brzezinski’s incessant quarrelling with Carter’s more pragmatic secretary of state Cyrus Vance. This internal opposition to Brzezinski and Henze’s plots would become increasingly obvious as the administration entered its second year, and there were many within the foreign policy establishment who did not believe it to be wise to stir up the nationalities inside the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, by 1978 the Carter administration was keen to build on the early advances it had made in the human rights sphere, and the hardliners pressed on with their plans and attempted to build a concrete framework and policy options towards the nationalities inside the Soviet Union.

⁹⁶ Presidential Directive/NSC-18, US National Strategy, August 24, 1977, Presidential Directives, DJCL. <https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/directives/pd18.pdf>

⁹⁷ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Stepped Up Covert/Overt Activities Targeted at Eastern Europe and the USSR November 18, 1977, Box 1, 10-11/77, Horn/Special, Staff Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

⁹⁸ Gates, p142

⁹⁹ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Stepped Up Covert/Overt Activities Targeted at Eastern Europe and the USSR November 18, 1977, Box 1, 10-11/77, Horn/Special, Staff Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

The birth of the Nationalities Working Group

As 1978 began, the Carter administration took stock of their achievements over the previous twelve months and charted a course forward for the new year. It had not all gone to plan thus far. Carter had been stung by criticism of his early attempts at integrating human rights promotion into US foreign policy; accusations of double standards abound, efforts at democracy promotion in places such as Iran and Latin America were producing mixed results, and the new approach was causing alarm among both the Soviets and traditional allies alike¹⁰⁰. Fashioning foreign policy around human rights, making it a lodestar of American activity in the world, was proving more difficult than Carter had hoped, and the president was discovering that noble ideals did not always translate easily into coherent strategy. Nevertheless, liberal members of his administration were undeterred and determined to build on the limited gains they had made thus far.

In early 1978, Anthony Lake, who headed the State Department's Policy Planning Staff¹⁰¹ and who would go on to become Bill Clinton's national security advisor in 1993, outlined a review of the Carter administration's achievements at the behest of Cyrus Vance. In his review, Lake acknowledged the difficulties they had faced thus far, drawing attention to the continued competitiveness of the East-West relationship and unresolved regional issues around the globe. Yet Lake laid out a vision of a post-Cold War world, "for close to three decades, the Cold War dominated our view of the world: today we must deal with a pluralistic international setting of several major dimensions". While stressing the importance of the US alliance system, Lake also called for cooperation with communist nations, "operating on the assumption that no animosity is so deep that there is not some common ground". He accepted that compromise would be necessary at times yet urged American foreign policy to move "beyond the generalised doctrines of times past", while continuing to highlight human rights, cooperation and arms reduction talks as prime items on the agenda for the year ahead. "Our choices in 1978 will shape the character of America's role in the world for years to come", Lake stated boldly¹⁰².

The Soviets continued to be baffled by Carter's approach, this was not the sort of relationship they had become accustomed to when Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon were on the other side of the negotiations. At a Politburo meeting in April 1978, Brezhnev had

¹⁰⁰ Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment*, p48-49

¹⁰¹ The Policy Planning Staff is essentially a think tank within the State Department.

¹⁰² "Foreign Policy Report 3/2/78", Box 1, Folder 8, Director Policy Planning Staff - Foreign Policy Report 1978, Anthony Lake Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (hereafter LoC).

regaled his comrades with details of the tough line he had taken with Vance during recent discussions, complaining about the contradictions in Carter's approach to the Soviet Union. The Soviet leader had laid out his expectations for arms reduction talks and also taken the opportunity, "to openly express to him our evaluation of the contradictions of Carter's inconsistent foreign policy line... to remind Vance (and through him, Carter) that there are things which are more important than the foreign policy manoeuvres of the moment, particularly: issues of war and peace". Brezhnev revealed Vance had, "accepted with due attention the criticism of the foreign policy zigzags of the Carter government, and will, of course, pass them on to the President... Overall, I think, the conversation was useful. It will help Carter to see several things in a more realistic light"¹⁰³. Carter's focus on human rights was a source of real irritation to the Kremlin and was proving a complication in arms reduction talks and in the exploration of other areas of cooperation. The Soviet crackdown on dissidents also continued, with US intelligence observing that harassment of Western embassy officials, activists and journalists was being stepped up, and embryonic Helsinki groups in the non-Russian Soviet republics of Lithuania, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine had been successfully broken by the authorities¹⁰⁴.

Nevertheless, despite these actions, many dissidents within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe took heart from Carter's dedication to the cause of human rights, and from the president's deep religious piety. After a trip to Moscow and Minsk in early 1978, Odom reported to Brzezinski on the importance of Carter's religious beliefs to many anti-communist party elements inside the USSR. In meetings with well-placed contacts, Odom was able to establish that the "subtle and continuous image of the President's religiosity projected to the Soviet public gives the greatest chance for undercutting public tolerance of the party and for provoking internal party debate in the face of what looks like a period of growing repression... The combination of President Carter's religiosity and changing conditions in the USSR... creates a unique situation"¹⁰⁵. There were indeed rumblings of discontent within Soviet society, and the hawks in the Carter administration were resolute in their intention to exploit them.

¹⁰³ "CPSU CC Politburo Transcript, 27 April 1978 (excerpt)," April 27, 1978, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (APRF), f. 3, op. 120, d. 39, ll. 187-189; <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117043>

¹⁰⁴ "Progress and Retrogression in Human Rights in 1977", January 11, 1978, Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Volume II, FRUS 1977-1980

¹⁰⁵ Memo Odom to Brzezinski, "Random Notes from Moscow and Minski", undated but context and archival filing places the document in early 1978, Box 15, 15-52-10, USSR 1-5/78, Brzezinski Office File, Country Chron, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

Brzezinski and his allies were eager to press ahead with their ideological crusade against the Soviet Union, with plans underway to launch a covert action program which would significantly increase both the quality and quantity of Western literature and propaganda smuggled into the USSR. Meanwhile, Paul Henze and Sam Huntington had been pressing hard inside the administration for the creation of a Nationalities Working Group (NWG), which would allow officials from across various agencies and departments of the US government to come together for discussion on the Soviet nationalities¹⁰⁶. Henze intended for this group to become a regular forum for sharing ideas, expanding knowledge of the Soviet republics, and the dissemination of research which could then be used to support covert activity. The Nationalities Working Group was finally established on 20 January 1978, set within the NSC with the East-West Planning Group in oversight, and held its first official meeting in June of that year.¹⁰⁷ Henze immediately began to arrange seminars, invited academics to discuss their research at meetings, and organised conferences and various events.

From the early days of this venture, there was a real interest in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union, with both Huntington and Henze convinced that the cocktail of Islamic fervency and nationalism would eventually lead to major problems for Soviet authorities in the soft underbelly of the USSR¹⁰⁸. There was also a feeling that the national consciousness of Muslim troops from the Central Asian republics could undermine cohesion in the Soviet Army¹⁰⁹. This question continued to animate the NWG over the course of Carter's time in office as the group explored issues such as the ethnic composition of the Soviet armed forces, migration trends across the Central Asian republics, ethnocentrism in the Caucasus, and the organisation infrastructure of the nationalist protest movements within the USSR¹¹⁰. However, not everyone inside the US government was on board with this aggressive new approach.

The CIA had a policy of avoiding direct contact with dissidents for fear of alerting the KGB to their activities, favouring the use of intermediary groups to connect with opposition

¹⁰⁶ Representatives from the CIA, State Department, NSC, Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were usually present at NWG meetings.

¹⁰⁷ Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen school, and the crisis of détente," p219-220

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p220

¹⁰⁹ Kuzio, U.S. support for Ukraine's liberation during the Cold War, p10

¹¹⁰ CIA memo from National Foreign Assessment Center to Members of the Nationalities Working Group, "Current and Scheduled Research Topics", November 13 1978, Box 23, 28-68-3, USSR Nationalities: 10/78- 7/80, Larrabee Subject File, Staff Material - Europe, USSR and East/West, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

forces within the Soviet bloc¹¹¹. The State Department, on the other hand, had long been hesitant with regards to any covert measures against the USSR. Henze found their position absolutely exasperating, telling Brzezinski, “I recall Cy Vance at one of the earliest SCC reviews of covert activity in February 1977 stating that he did not want anyone to think that he was *totally* against covert activity—but he felt we should engage in it *very seldom* and only in *limited fashion* and under the *most unusual circumstances when fundamental U.S. interests were in serious danger*. He went on to say that he felt we should maintain *some* covert capability but we should use it *very seldom*. This Vance view was readily accepted in State; we hear it all the time. It fits comfortably into a broader State approach to foreign policy—the notion that whether *action* is overt or covert, it should always be minimal, (if it cannot be avoided at all) taken only after long deliberation and delay and never be very comprehensive or sustained”¹¹².

This reluctance to engage in covert action against the Soviet Union clearly manifested itself in the State Department view of the nationalities issues. There was real discomfort at the prospect of stirring up ethnic resentments within the USSR, and fears over what these efforts would mean for the stability of the Soviet Union and US-Soviet relations more widely. Robert Gates, who served in national security roles across five administrations during the Cold War, explains in his memoirs that the State Department was “wary of moving covertly (or overtly, for that matter) into the nationalities area... because they felt the United States simply was not well enough informed to be able to make appropriate decisions”¹¹³. After much delay, a policy paper on the Soviet nationalities was submitted to Brzezinski in June 1978, in which the State Department poured cold water on his plans for agitating the nationalities within the Soviet republics by pointing out that the US simply didn’t know enough about the nationality issues within the USSR to be able to craft a coherent strategy, and questioning the long term benefit to US foreign policy that agitating these ethnic groups may bring.

The State Department also saw a contradiction on the US side, namely that support for potentially divisive and violent nationalism was difficult to justify in light of American promotion of human rights¹¹⁴. To the hardliners in the administration this appeared like more delaying tactics but beginning in mid-1978 the State Department did launch a long-

¹¹¹ Kuzio, U.S. support for Ukraine’s liberation during the Cold War, p9

¹¹² Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Covert Action and the “In Extremis” Doctrine, March 23, 1978, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy, Volume XXVIII, FRUS 1977-1980.

¹¹³ Gates, p93

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p93-94

term information-gathering campaign to improve US knowledge of the disparate and diverse nationality and ethnic groupings inside the Soviet Union and to analyse how the social and demographic changes within the USSR changes may pose problems for the Soviet leadership¹¹⁵. The State Department also instructed its embassies and consulates across Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean to pay more attention to dealings with any Soviet minority nationalities.

The Soviets were aware of these developments, which they were finding exceedingly irksome. In May 1978, Andrei Gromyko, the grizzled and long-serving Soviet foreign minister met with Vance in New York. Gromyko pressed the secretary of state for an explanation of the new-found hostility in the American approach to the Soviet Union, which both perplexed and annoyed him. "I want to ask how the explosion of propaganda hostile to the USSR, which we have observed in the USA for some time already, can be explained?" Gromyko pushed. Explaining that the Soviets had always looked for constructive ways to interpret US statements and actions, he specifically highlighted the abrasive role of Brzezinski in the deterioration of the US-Soviet relationship, lecturing "most recently our attention has been more and more attracted to the fact that, beginning with the President (and Brzezinski has already surpassed himself in this), American officials are constantly making statements which are aimed, or so it seems to us more and more, at nearly bringing us back to the period of "cold war"¹¹⁶.

While in America, Gromyko relayed his increasing alarm back to Moscow, and the Soviet leadership grew ever more concerned. The issues raised by the Soviet foreign minister in his discussions with Vance were echoed by Brezhnev in a speech to the Politburo in June 1978, telling his comrades, "it is completely clearly apparent that we are experiencing a very complicated period in the development of international relations". The Soviet leader laid the blame for this setback at the feet of Carter and his relentless national security advisor, and Brezhnev went on, "the primary source of this deterioration is the growing aggression of the foreign policy of the Carter government, the continually more sharply anti-

¹¹⁵ Cable, "Soviet Nationality Issues", August 27, 1979, Electronic Telegrams 1979, Central Foreign Policy Files, created 7/1/1973 - 12/31/1979, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State Access to Archival Databases (AAD), National Archives and Records Administration (Hereafter NARA).

¹¹⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and US Secretary of State Vance, 31 May 1978 (Excerpts)," June 02, 1978, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF; <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117044>

Soviet character of the statements of the President himself and of his closest colleagues - in the first instance those of Brzezinski”¹¹⁷.

Facing internal resistance

The remainder of 1978 would see Brzezinski and Henze locked in budgetary battles over radio broadcasting funding, a key component in their strategy for reaching the nationalities of the Soviet Union. Through Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, the US had been broadcasting into the Soviet world from the earliest days of the Cold War¹¹⁸. The Carter administration saw the benefit of this radio programming and had moved to not merely maintain this broadcasting, but to actually strengthen it further¹¹⁹. However, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) would routinely question the necessity for radio broadcast funding and threaten to cut the budget for this endeavour, putting the entire project at risk. In mid-1978 OMB threatened budget cuts which would severely derail Brzezinski’s hopes of reaching the disaffected ethnic groups inside the USSR, dashing his hopes of agitating the Soviet nationalities. In July, Henze anxiously reported to Brzezinski that, “OMB was recommending to the President that broadcasts in non-minority languages be severely curtailed, that RL as a whole be considered as potential trade-off to Soviets for better behaviour and that OMB expects tighter budgets for RFE/RL for future years!”. Henze was dumbfounded, feeling the development was completely out of alignment with the overall direction of their approach towards the USSR, especially in light of Brzezinski’s hard-line and more uncompromising posture which the administration had been adopting recently¹²⁰.

Ralph Walter, the Executive Vice President for Programs and Policy at RFE/RL, shared his concerns with Henze, with the NSC man reporting back to Brzezinski that Walter viewed the “budget-cutting exercise as completely out of harmony with the positive thrust we have built up in the radios during the past 18 months” and raised concerns that it could do

¹¹⁷ "Speech by L.I. Brezhnev to CPSU CC Politburo, 08 June 1978," June 08, 1978, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Center for Storage of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), Moscow, fond 89, per. 34, dok. 1. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111257>

¹¹⁸ See Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Richard H. Cummings, *Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom": Rallying Americans Behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950-1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, "Effect of Foreign Broadcasts in the USSR", May 2, 1978, Box 79, 6-79-6, USSR 5/78, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹²⁰ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, "Evening Report", July 21, 1978, Box 6, Evening Reports File, 6-8/78, Horn/Special, Staff Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

“serious, fundamental harm”. Henze explained that Walter felt cutting the radios’ budget to be absurd, “in light of the small amount of money involved, at a time when we are trying to make fundamental, long-term improvements in the radios and when the need for them is obvious in view of heightening tensions within the Soviet Bloc and heightening tensions in our own relations with the Soviets”¹²¹. The threat to cut radio funding would have serious implications for Brzezinski’s nationalities strategy because RFE/RL had been re-broadcasting dissident literature back into the Soviet Union as well as interviewing Soviet tourists to Europe, taking the opportunity to find out their views on the nationalities issue back home in the USSR¹²².

On July 28, Henze had lunch with John Gronouski, the chairman of the Board of International Broadcasting, and Glenn Ferguson, the president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, who were both equally concerned about the prospect of their budgets being slashed. Henze fed back details of this meeting to Brzezinski, where the three men had decided “the best defence is to go on the offensive”. Gronouski and Ferguson agreed to work diligently towards building more Congressional support for radio broadcasting, the Board for International Broadcasting would provide “strong documentation on the policy significance of the radios” in order to justify upcoming requests for budgetary increases, and Henze suggested that as part of the current Soviet nationalities exercise within the administration, that the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) should give its “strong endorsement for the concept of expanding broadcasting to non-Russians, expanding research to back it up, and expanding personnel so that all these tasks can be performed effectively and sustained over time”. This last point was absolutely vital for Henze, telling Brzezinski “the idea of cutting out nationality broadcasts at the very point when we are working to develop a long-range program for increased U.S. Government attention to this field is incongruous”¹²³.

In September 1978, Brzezinski wrote to James McIntyre, the director of OMB, to make the case that rather than budget cuts, the administration would actually like to see an increase in funding for radio transmissions to the USSR. The national security advisor informed McIntyre that, “the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) broadcasting operation... is a key instrument for implementing our policies toward the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, an important element in the President’s human rights program and a symbol of the

¹²¹ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “RFE/RL and Budget Cuts”, July 28, 1978, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, Volume XX, FRUS 1977-1980

¹²² Kuzio, U.S. support for Ukraine’s liberation during the Cold War, p9

¹²³ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “RFE/RL and Budget Cuts”, July 28, 1978, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, Volume XX, FRUS 1977-1980

permanent American commitment to free flow of information and ideas". In requesting a modest increase of 7-8%, Brzezinski specifically highlighted the role that radio broadcasting played in his overall strategy towards the non-Russian Soviet nationalities, writing "one special aspect of this effort derives from the fact that the SCC recently approved a broad program for increasing U.S. Government knowledge of the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union whose rapid rate of population increase will soon make them the majority. RFE/RL has a unique capacity to contribute in this area and one of our objectives is to improve both research and broadcasting by recruiting more young people of non-Russian nationalities and training them well"¹²⁴. This initial difficulty passed, but the issue of radio funding would crop up time and again during the course the next few years.

As 1978 drew to a close, advisors close to the president evaluated the previous 12 months and declared that much progress had been made. Anthony Lake believed that Carter had made substantial progress toward SALT-II agreements with the Soviets, and in NATO and Warsaw Pact troops reductions. Lake felt Carter successfully "sought a pattern of détente with the Soviet Union that is both comprehensive and genuinely reciprocal" and that US-Eastern European relations had likewise improved. He saw the Carter administration as having effectively improved co-operation with Western allies while engaging the newly emerging issues in the developing world and moving towards the normalisation of relations with China. Lake also declared the president's approach to human rights promotion to have been a success, "the president's human rights policy is widely perceived as a reassertion of traditional American values... it has contributed to creating a climate of global awareness and concern for human rights, which few governments fail to take into account"¹²⁵.

For hardliners like Henze, Huntington and Brzezinski there had also been much to cheer over the course of 1978. Despite dogged opposition from the State Department and budgetary worries, with the formation of the Nationalities Working Group the hawks had been able to establish the first dedicated forum for exploring the nationalities issues inside the Soviet Union within the US government. Similarly, covert actions inside the USSR had been ramped-up, with smuggling programmes targeting disaffected nationalities with dissident literature and American propaganda material, and an increase in radio broadcasting specifically aimed at the non-Russian Soviet republics. In December 1978, the

¹²⁴ Memo Brzezinski to McIntyre, "RFE/RL FY 1980 Budget", September 1978, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, Volume XX, FRUS 1977-1980

¹²⁵ "Carter Administration Summary of Accomplishments", December 1978, Box 2, Folder 10, Director Policy Planning Staff, Speech File- Background Material 1978-1979, Anthony Lake Papers, LoC.

CIA had produced a report assessing the results of their stepped-up publishing and distribution efforts inside the USSR and Eastern Europe, submitted to Stan Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence. On receiving a copy of the report, Henze shared it with Brzezinski declaring, “Stan Turner has sent a good summary report on the results of CIA’s effort, which we approved a year ago last summer, to publish and send more indigenous-language material into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The results are impressive. They are typical of what can be done when long-established, professionally run programs are given the opportunity to expand and the best judgment of the people who are running them is taken as the basis of judgment for what can be done”¹²⁶. As the year drew to a close, the president was determined to press on with his expansive human rights agenda, while Brzezinski and Henze remained fully focused on making life difficult for the Soviets over the coming years. Unknown to all, 1979 would prove to be one of the worst years for American foreign policy in living memory.

The Muslims of Soviet Central Asia

In early 1979, American intelligence painted a gloomy picture of the dissident scene inside the Soviet Union, with Helsinki activists and religious dissidents within the Soviet republics in particular facing harsh crackdowns. The Soviet leadership had taken steps to quash the emerging Helsinki movement within its borders, with groups in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine ravaged by a series of arrests and the imprisonment of their leading members. Religious believers among the Soviet nationalities were also bearing the brunt of an increased wave of repression, in which unregistered Christians in Belorussia and Ukraine were subject to imprisonment, and the hopes of Crimean Tartars to return to their ancestral homeland in Central Asia were again blocked¹²⁷. Henze believed in the importance of reaching these groups, and he remained content with the direction of the CIA’s covert book and publishing operations in the USSR, which had been ramped up at Brzezinski’s direction in the first two years of Carter’s presidency. There was a feeling that efforts in this area had always been more advanced in Eastern Europe than in the USSR itself, but there was evidence that this was now changing. Henze told Brzezinski in January of 1979, “CIA has just sent me...an extremely interesting report prepared on the book distribution program targeted at the Soviet Union. It demonstrates that the Soviet program is maturing and showing increase of effectiveness in depth”. Henze went on, crowing that the, “principal

¹²⁶ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “CIA Report on Stepped-up Publishing and Distribution Effort to USSR and Eastern Europe”, December 18, 1978, Volume VI, Soviet Union, FRUS 1977-1980

¹²⁷ “The Soviet Dissident Scene Since Mid-1978”, Memorandum Prepared by the CIA, January 30, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume VI, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1977-1980

theme is the way in which responses from the Soviet Program are beginning to exhibit the same patterns as the East European program did at an earlier period in its development. The report provides encouraging evidence of the sophistication and refinement of this program and demonstrates that we have here an undertaking on which we can build and expand almost indefinitely”.

Nevertheless, he felt there was more budgetary trouble brewing, and he feared that the CIA director was beginning to wilt under pressure from OMB, a development which he felt would severely undercut the ideological dimension of US Soviet policy. “In the light of this highly positive report, it is distressing, as I mentioned to you in a recent Evening Report, to discover that Turner has accepted OMB’s unimaginative dictum on this program—ruling out any further expansion in 1980 or beyond. A program such as this contributes as much to our national defence as any of our weaponry - besides which its costs are chicken feed”¹²⁸, Henze warned Brzezinski. Despite Henze’s efforts now beginning to pay off, he remained apprehensive that his labours would all be in vain without the requisite funding needed to successfully reach the nationality groups of the Soviet Union. Henze was mistrustful of OMB’s intentions and the prospects of the continued level of financing required for his schemes beyond 1980, an issue he would continually raise with Brzezinski.

Meanwhile, the State Department, Henze’s old sparring partner, also continued its intelligence-gathering program on the Soviet nationalities, although theirs was geared toward gaining a better understanding of ethnic issues within the USSR rather than to provoke unrest. In January 1979, Foggy Bottom reached out to its diplomats stationed in the Soviet Union, informing them the “Department wishes to commend the reporting on Soviet nationality issues by embassy and constituent posts. At the same time, we wish to solicit Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev views in an effort to develop interagency-approved guidance for further reporting in this area”. In particular, the State Department wanted its embassy staff to observe the growth of Great Russian nationalism and its impact on the other nationalities, any differences in attitude between the inhabitants of a single nationality, the impact of the Central Asian people in the Soviet Union, the extent to which religion promotes national identity, and the long-term prospects for Soviet leadership

¹²⁸ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “CIA’s Soviet and East European Book and Publications Program”, January 23, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, FRUS 1977-1980. Interestingly, Henze believed one such recipient of these publications had been Cardinal Woytyla, who became the newly elected Pope John Paul II in late 1978. Henze told Brzezinski, who developed a close relationship with the Pontiff, “among the recipients of book mailings to Eastern Europe had been Cardinal Woytyla”, who had been receiving a, “considerable quantity of material in both Polish and English”.

control over the Soviet nationality issues¹²⁹. Embassy Moscow replied, suggesting further areas of study, such as demographic changes, language use and urban/rural nationality developments. The Embassy informed Washington they would be supplementing their usual reporting on nationality issues that year with a series of follow-up reports which would take a deeper look at the situation “in light of new developments”¹³⁰. Regardless of the overall objective, there was now a growing interest in nationality issues inside the USSR, a topic which had been understudied for so long. The changing tides of the US-Soviet relationship, the waning of détente, and a new-found focus on the abuses inherent in the Soviet system were proving opportunities to explore policy areas which had previously lay untouched.

Over the course of 1979, Henze and the Nationalities Working Group increasingly trained their focus on the Muslim republics of Soviet Central Asia, a region they believed to be simmering with anger and resentment, perfectly primed to ignite. The growing potential for ethnic unrest and instability in Central Asia was something these hard-liners felt the US government should be paying more attention to, and they began working towards that end, a project which would form the focal point of the NWG’s efforts throughout Carter’s remaining time in office. With the Soviet Union being drawn toward the escalating situation in Afghanistan, and the United States monitoring the situation closely, interest in the nearby Central Asian Soviet republics within the US government notably increased. As part of the NWG’s work to promote a greater understanding of the Soviet nationalities inside the US government, various academics were invited to take part in its meetings and seminars. One such academic was Alexandre Bennigsen, a Russian-born and Paris-trained sociologist who was fascinated with Islam in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, and who harboured long-standing notions that the Muslims of Central Asia would eventually rise up and cast-off Soviet imperialism. Bennigsen taught at several top American universities, and together with like-minded scholars such as S Enders Wimbush of the RAND Corporation, Jeremy Azrael, and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, formed a cadre of academics who wrote prolifically on the Muslims of the Soviet Union, attracting the attention of officials inside the US government¹³¹. These scholars were convinced that the Islamic regions of the USSR

¹²⁹ Cable, “Soviet Nationality Issues”, January 19, 1979, Electronic Telegrams 1979, Central Foreign Policy Files, created 7/1/1973 - 12/31/1979, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State Access to Archival Databases (AAD), NARA.

¹³⁰ Cable, “Soviet Nationality Issues”, February 6, 1979, Electronic Telegrams 1979, Central Foreign Policy Files, created 7/1/1973 - 12/31/1979, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State Access to Archival Databases (AAD), NARA.

¹³¹ For a sample of their work see, Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (Central Asian Research Centre, London, 1967); Jeremy R. Azrael ed., *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices* (Westport: Praeger, 1978); Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

were on the verge of revolt, and that the potent cocktail of nationalism and Islamic religious devotion would pose a very real danger to the unity of the Soviet Union in the near future¹³².

There was a growing belief among Western observers that the Muslims of Central Asia posed a particularly thorny problem for Soviet rule, with the centuries old feelings of religious nationalism of the region viewed as fundamentally at odds with long-term communist rule. Likewise, there was a sense that Soviet claims of support for national liberation in the Third World were undermined by the repressive treatment of their own minorities at home, especially in the Islamic regions of the Soviet empire. Henze was a close associate of these scholars, and shared their long-standing interest in Central Asian affairs, having first started writing on the subject in the 1950s¹³³. He soon welcomed them into the fold of the Nationalities Working Group, where their ideas found a willing audience among certain policymakers who believed the relative stability of the détente era was coming to an end, and who were now searching for new ways to undermine the internal coherency of their Soviet adversary.

The changing dynamics of the 1970s, the increased focus on the internal nature of the Soviet system, and a feeling that the Soviet Union was in the ascendancy, allowed for more creativity in US Cold War strategy. The ideas of Henze and Bennisen, long viewed as outside of the mainstream, were now given a hearing at the very heart of the United States government. Bennisen and Azrael first started attending NWG meetings in 1978, and their papers on the Central Asian nationalities often formed the core of the discussion among the attendees. Events taking place in Afghanistan merely served to heighten the interest in the region among US officials, as turmoil threatened to engulf the Soviet Union's testy southern frontier. A communist regime had come to power in Kabul in mid-1978 and was now engaged in a ferocious guerrilla warfare against local mujahideen forces, with the Soviets monitoring the situation intensely, and Washington looking on with interest.

In February 1979, the CIA hosted an NWG dinner and discussion evening in order to explore the current status of nationalities issues inside the Soviet Union and to assess their policy implications for the US, with Henze, Azrael and Bennisen all in attendance. The questions for discussion which were issued to the attendees ahead of the meeting offer a note-worthy insight into the kind of nationalities questions which were animating US policymakers at the

¹³² Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennisen school, and the crisis of détente," p212

¹³³ See Paul B. Henze, "Politics and Alphabets in Inner Asia", *Asian Affairs* 43:1 (1956), 29- 51

time. The meeting planned to address questions such as; how will the large disparities between the high birth rates and low industrial levels of development in Soviet Central Asia and the low birth rates and high levels of industrial development in the “European” republics of the Soviet Union affect future Soviet economic policy and performance? How will Soviet military practices and capabilities be affected by the impending rapid increase in the proportion of Muslims in the armed forces? What are the implications for Soviet domestic and foreign policy of the simultaneous and associated upsurge of nationalism among the Russian and non-Russian peoples of the USSR? And what are the implications for US policy of these changes in the ethnic composition and configuration of the Soviet population? Papers circulated ahead of the event also give a glimpse into the potential role the Soviet nationalities could play in US strategy towards the USSR. There was a view that the “changes that are occurring in the ethno-demographic and ethno-political orientation of the Soviet population could seriously complicate the lives of future Soviet policymakers. Although these changes of themselves will almost certainly not lead to a breakdown of the Soviet system, they could generate considerable within-system stress and hamper the further growth of Soviet power”¹³⁴.

The NWG believed the composition of the USSR was marked by a large and growing disparity between the birth rates of the Slavic and Baltic nationalities, and the nationalities from Central Asia and the Caucasus¹³⁵. As a result, by the 1980s the only sizable pool of workers would be in Central Asia, perhaps prompting the regime to “shift its centre of gravity eastwards” in order to maintain economic output, an undertaking that was fraught with difficulties and could lead to a dramatic decline in Soviet industrial output¹³⁶. This lack of manpower may also tempt the Soviets to cut back on their armed forces, or to face the prospect of their military overwhelmingly drawing from the Central Asian republics, with the potential for language and cultural barriers becoming engrained in the Soviet armed forces and a backlash from the Slavic troops. From America’s point of view, these demographic changes could have serious consequences for Soviet power projection in the world and the USSR’s ability to prosecute an activist foreign policy in far-flung places, which in turn would have implications for US Soviet policy. The NWG stressed, “although the

¹³⁴ Memo Coordinator of Academic Relations NFAC to Distribution List, “DCI Discussion/Dinner” on Soviet Nationalities Issues”, February 14, 1979, CIA General Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST.

¹³⁵ For a good study of Soviet nationalities policy and background information on Soviet Central Asia see, Grigol Ubiria, *Soviet Nation-Building in Central Asia: The Making of the Kazakh and Uzbek Nations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹³⁶ Memo Coordinator of Academic Relations NFAC to Distribution List, “DCI Discussion/Dinner” on Soviet Nationalities Issues”, February 14, 1979, CIA General Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST.

ethno-demographic and ethno-political pressures that it faces could lead the Kremlin to impose harsher restrictions at home and to tighten its grip on Eastern Europe, they could also conduce toward greater Soviet willingness to enter into balanced force reduction agreements and, more generally, toward a curtailment of Soviet “globalism” and the adoption of a lower Soviet profile in international affairs”.

However, for these outcomes to be fully realised, US and Western policymakers may “have to apply - or be ready to apply - some of the leverage that it will inevitably acquire by virtue of the fact that the ethno-demographic and ethno-political pressures on the Soviet regime can to at least some extent be alleviated or exacerbated by Western actions”.¹³⁷ These officials understood the importance of studying the internal nature of a regime and the societal forces at play within its system, believing these factors could play a key role in determining a state’s foreign policy decisions. The thinking within the NWG was very much centred around the notion that ethnic demographic changes within the Soviet republics were going to have second and third order consequences for Soviet power abroad and stability at home. Aside from harbouring any desire to see the US aggravate these tensions further from the outside, there was a belief among the NWG that it was important for American policymakers to gain an awareness of these internal Soviet developments in order to better understand the implications for Soviet foreign policy and US-Soviet relations moving forward.

The dinner and discussion evening took place on the 22 February 1979, and the following week Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, followed up with some musings to the Coordinator of Academic Relations at the National Foreign Assessment Center (NFAC), calling the dinner “stimulating and very helpful”. At the event, Bennisen discussed the need for the US government to engage in the translating and interpreting journals and newspapers published in the Muslim areas of the Soviet Union, making the point that it was necessary to get local journals rather than republic level ones in order to really get a sense of the differing opinions and brewing disputes within the region. Turner felt this was an excellent suggestion and urged further exploration into the role these journals could play in “acquiring, translating and disseminating this kind of intelligence”.

¹³⁷ Memo Coordinator of Academic Relations NFAC to Distribution List, “DCI Discussion/Dinner” on Soviet Nationalities Issues”, February 14, 1979, CIA General Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST.

He shared a further report from the meeting which stated, “the Soviet Muslims enjoy a great degree of de facto national and cultural independence and the native languages are used in government, educational and business organisations. A large number of books, magazines, journals, and newspapers are published in the minority languages. These publications represent the best open source for understanding Soviet policy, strategy, and tactics toward independent Muslim nations. The topics of Soviet foreign policy toward these countries, and the role of Muslim minorities in the “eventual liberation” of related ethnic groups across the border are prominently featured in the minority press; much more than the central Russian language press ever publishes”.

With tensions rising in Afghanistan, and the Soviet leadership deliberating their strategy, there were fears of more Soviet incursions into Muslim areas, perhaps using their own Soviet Muslim population as a spearhead for penetration and subversion of further Islamic territories. However, Turner felt, “I almost got the impression from our dinner conversation that the Soviets may be wary of annexing more Muslim populations, considering the problems they’re having of absorbing those which they currently have”¹³⁸. The Muslims of Central Asia were seen as a latent force for disruption within the Soviet Union, and certainly a group which the US government should continue to gather intelligence on in an attempt to understand future Soviet foreign policy activities around the world.

Growing tension with Moscow

By spring 1979, with summit talks on the proposed SALT-II agreement with the Soviets on the horizon, the Carter administration became aware of considerable turmoil inside the Soviet leadership, as various factions jostled for prime position to replace Brezhnev when the time came. The Soviet leader retained a firm grip on power, despite his increasing frailty and diminishing capacity to work, but below the Soviet leader lay growing agitation among his fellow Politburo members. In March, the CIA informed Brzezinski that, “Brezhnev’s prestige...is at an all-time high, evidently unaffected by his ebbing capacity for sustained work”, yet there also was “the conditions for increased political jockeying among the leaders who will be instrumental in determining the outcome of the political succession... The stage may be set, therefore, for a drama of major conflict among the leading contenders for power and a possible leadership upheaval both before and after

¹³⁸ Memo DCI Turner to Coordinator of Academic Relations NFAC, “Soviet Nationalities”, February 27, 1979, CIA General Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST.

Brezhnev's demise"¹³⁹. The administration was eager for a clear picture going into SALT negotiations, which were of vital importance to the president and something he wished to go smoothly. Nevertheless, despite his eagerness to secure an agreement on arms limitations with Soviets, by this time Carter and his administration were holding a very firm line with Moscow. As Barbara Zanchetta says, "by the time of the Vienna summit in mid-1979 the Carter administration had definitely taken a different line of action compared to the proclaimed when entering office... By Carter's mid-term there were no more doubts in Washington that US-Soviet relations were dominated by geopolitical competition. At the same time, the priority given to the signing of SALT-II confirmed that continued cooperation in the limitation of nuclear arms was still a vital necessity. Once again, competition and cooperation characterised America's complex Soviet policy"¹⁴⁰.

As the White House grappled with the Kremlin's courtyard rivalries, Henze remained fixated on the inner workings of the Soviet system and improving American attempts to reach the restless nationalities there. In March, he again informed Brzezinski of the continued effectiveness of the CIA's covert book and periodical program inside the Soviet Union, with a new status report "providing striking evidence of the effectiveness of this program", and demonstrating, "that the program has made highly productive use of the extra funds which you directed be allocated to it nearly two years ago". However, Henze once again believed the endeavour was in danger of being severely hampered due to looming budget cuts, telling his boss, "the report reveals, however, that the program is being curtailed in FY (financial year) 1980, by cancelling an increase of \$1.5 million which was originally planned. Levelling off (actually slightly reducing) a program such as this after it has gained momentum from expansion is especially unwise and not cost-effective...I do not believe we should let this excellent program "plateau off". Funds added to it are among the most productive CIA spends for covert action. In fact, this program constitutes a large part of what is left of CIA's covert action program and they constitute most of what we are doing against our highest-priority target—Eastern Europe and the USSR". Henze guarded his work jealously, always fearing the axe was about to fall on his mission to reach the nationalities of the Soviet Union. There is a sense that his entire project was never fully accepted as an integral part of the administration's Soviet strategy and may not even have continued were it not for his persistent prodding. Brzezinski forwarded a memo to Turner at the CIA, requesting that funding be found to continue the project, commenting tersely "the Soviet

¹³⁹ CIA report, "Review of Soviet Internal Affairs", March 1979, Box 80, 6-81-1, USSR3-4/79, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL

¹⁴⁰ Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970's* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p241

Union and Eastern Europe are our highest-priority targets for sustained covert action impact. Money to permit continued expansion of this entire program during FY 1980 should be found through reprogramming”.

In his April reply, Turner informed Brzezinski that the CIA would, “remain alert to the possibility of reprogramming to provide additional funds”, but as things stood, “Fiscal Year 1980 is a very austere budget and, at this point in time, we cannot identify funds available for such reprogramming”¹⁴¹. By April, there had been no positive developments in the search for increased funding for Henze’s cherished book distribution program targeting the nationalities inside the USSR, as he forlornly informed Brzezinski that their efforts to push for additional funding had “to be chalked up as a failure” for now. Henze believed that growing personal animosity between Brzezinski and the CIA director was to blame for the setback, continuing “my own sources at the Agency indicate that funds are not really this tight... but Turner has made this an issue on which he is unwilling to give in to you. I am told that further effort to press him on this now will probably only solidify his position—so the advice is to press during the summer for allocation of FY-year-end funds... I see no alternative but to content ourselves with this for now—since cuts now contemplated do not start until 1 October”¹⁴². However, for Henze the budgetary battle was far from over.

The successful conclusion of the SALT-II treaty in June provided détente with one final fig leaf, the Vienna agreement proving the last gasp of an era which was fast nearing an end. The administration continued to monitor the level of dissident activity within the USSR over the course of the year, growing tensions with the USSR highlighting the need to fully understand the internal forces within the Soviet Union. The proposed opening of a US consulate in Kiev would potentially help with this operation, opening a window onto Ukraine for the US government. Yet exhaustive negotiations with the Soviets over a reciprocal agreement which would see the USSR open a consulate in New York had dragged on since the Nixon presidency. The previous December, Senator Charles Mathias of Maryland had taken an official fact-finding trip to the USSR and visited the site of the proposed consulate in Kiev. In spring 1979, Mathias had informed his friend Odom that there remained a lot of work to be done in order to ready the Kiev building, remarking, “legitimate questions can be raised about the size of this building and, indeed, about the whole manner in which this

¹⁴¹ Henze to Brzezinski, “CIA’s Book and Periodical Distribution Program for Eastern Europe and USSR”, March 15, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁴² Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Soviet/EE Book Programs”, April 24, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, FRUS, 1977-1980

enterprise has been handled, although there is no question that a consulate in Kiev is a good idea...I do not believe that our government has been as firm with the Soviets as we could have been or should have been”¹⁴³.

These findings merely added to the gloomy image Odom held of the current state of US-Soviet relations by the summer of 1979, telling Brzezinski he felt the intelligence reports on Soviet foreign activity painted a disturbing picture, in which an internally troubled USSR would continue to create problems around the world. Odom felt that the Kremlin was facing all manner of problems as the 1970s drew to a conclusion, “the present Soviet political system, “Brezhnevism”, is distinguished by domestic policy immobilism, bureaucratic entropy, and “resistance” groups”, yet, “Brezhnevism is also distinguished for its foreign policy mobilism, tactical agility, and new confidence based on its growing military power”. However, “the USSR cannot be a status quo power because the centrifugal forces of nationalism besiege the leadership, putting it into a dynamic relationship with its national minorities in particular and its neighbours and the world in general¹⁴⁴”.

It was these “centrifugal forces of nationalism” which continued to draw the attention of hardliners within the Carter administration, who were becoming more and more convinced that the Soviet house of cards was built on a very weak foundation, and that the age-old forces of nationalism were waiting to break through the cracks. Ominously, there was also a growing feeling within the US intelligence community that the Soviets may intervene in Afghanistan on the side of the embryonic communist regime in Kabul. The regime was besieged by insurgents, but at that time the CIA felt it did “not yet face a security situation that might prompt a request to Moscow for the direct intervention of Soviet forces, but such an appeal is conceivable over the next 12 months. The Soviets have an important stake in Afghanistan”. Nevertheless, the CIA believed, “the USSR might consider other options short of dispatching combat units to protect its interests in specific contingencies...If serious fighting broke out in areas adjoining the Soviet border, Soviet leaders might decide to provide increased numbers of tactical ground support aircraft, helicopter gunships, pilots, and advisers on the ground to assist Kabul”, but, “Soviet leaders also would have to weigh the regional and international political costs of direct intervention”¹⁴⁵. With the growing

¹⁴³ “Official Trip to the Soviet Union - Charles McC Mathias Jr”, April 9, 1979, Box 2, Chronological File April 1979, William Odom Papers, LoC.

¹⁴⁴ Memo Odom to Brzezinski, “Weekly Report on Soviet Affairs”, May 14, 1979, Box 80, 6-81-1 USSR 3-4/79, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹⁴⁵ CIA Report, “Afghanistan: A Regime Besieged”, July 1979, Volume XII, Afghanistan, FRUS, 1977-1980

conflict on the Soviet Union's doorstep, US officials became even more convinced that Central Asia would play a pivotal role in the future of the Soviet empire.

Henze longed to see US radio broadcasting to the Soviet Union diversify its content to include more languages from Soviet Central Asia, and his focus soon fell on Azeri, the language of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, which he felt lay at a strategic crossroads in Central Asia vital to US interests. In March, the head of the International Communication Agency John Reinhardt had written to Brzezinski outlining a host of new plans to increase Voice of America transmissions to the Soviet regions and introduce new languages such as Azeri and Ukrainian¹⁴⁶. With Brzezinski caught up with the SALT-II negotiations at the time, Henze replied on his behalf in June, telling Reinhardt, "we find your recommendations for technical expansion of VOA during the 1980's reasonable and justified in terms of basic foreign policy priorities. We endorse them fully. We would like to see you incorporate these plans in your budget projections for FY 1981 and beyond...On language priorities, we welcome your plans for further expansion of the Persian service which you have recently inaugurated. Attention should be given to the need to adjust broadcasting hours to improve prospects of attracting an optimum audience in Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia as well as in Iran itself. In respect to new languages, we concur in the priority of Azeri"¹⁴⁷. In August, Henze followed up, the "priority is Azeri, but it is being put off until 1981 because of budgetary stringency. Cost of adding Azeri (with impact in both Iran and USSR) is \$250,000 per year...In light of what we know the Soviets are doing in the area immediately to the south of their borders, we seem to be going at expanding our own impact in a very leisurely way. If all we need is \$250,000 to start Azeri, it seems to me it would be very much in our national interest to do it... At some point, it seems to me, we need to make the effort to get a little more zip and pep into this whole effort"¹⁴⁸.

Henze also became embroiled in a Transatlantic furore, as he reacted furiously to news that the British planned to make stringent cuts to the BBC's external broadcasting budget. On election as Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher had earmarked a 10%-25% cut in British government expenditure across the board, which would potentially lead to a significant diminution in international broadcasting. The BBC approached the US embassy in London for US government support against the cuts, and it was felt the US ambassador should make

¹⁴⁶ Reinhardt to Brzezinski, "VOA Language Priorities", March 7, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XXX, Public Diplomacy, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁴⁷ Letter Henze to Reinhardt, June 13, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XXX, Public Diplomacy, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁴⁸ Memo Henze to Reinhardt, "VOA Expansion", August 15, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XXX, Public Diplomacy, FRUS, 1977-1980

it clear to the British how detrimental the cuts would affect Western public diplomacy efforts at counteracting Soviet propaganda in the Third World¹⁴⁹. Henze grumbled, “the issue is serious. BBC’s prestige around the world is enormous and serves our common cause well, not simply British interests”. He told David Aaron, the assistant national security adviser, that the BBC was counteracting Soviet radio broadcasting in sensitive regions, “there is a great cry being raised in many quarters” at the prospect of the cuts, he moaned¹⁵⁰. Henze had faced internal resistance for most of his time in the White House, his efforts to redirect US foreign policy towards the internal ethnic weaknesses of the USSR mired in bureaucratic and budgetary battles, and it was beginning to wear him down.

The autumn of 1979 was a dark period for Jimmy Carter and his administration, as 52 Americans were seized as hostages in Iran after the US embassy was breached by armed protesters, and the Soviet Union launched an invasion of Afghanistan which sent seismic shocks around the world. In the lead up to the invasion, the Soviet Union had launched an internal policy review in December, with Ambassador Dobrynin returning to Moscow to assist in the analysis of the Soviet relationship with the US. Vance’s special adviser on Soviet affairs Marshall Shulman informed the secretary of state, “the Soviets are concerned that US-Soviet relations are moving inexorably toward a continuing downslide, in which the whole range of our cooperative activities, including arms control, would come into question”¹⁵¹. A few weeks later, it became apparent that an entirely new dimension of the fraying US-Soviet relationship was about to open up, as Moscow took the fateful decision to send the Soviet 40th Army into Afghanistan, with Marshall Brement of the NSC informing Aaron and Brzezinski, “it is hard to exaggerate the importance of what the Soviets are now poised to do in Afghanistan. Essentially, they seem to have made a decision to risk whatever is necessary, including major involvement in armed combat, to maintain a Communist government in Kabul”¹⁵². The White House wished to remain firm in the face of this Soviet aggression, yet of initial concern to the administration was the ratification of SALT-II, which had been agreed with the Soviets earlier that year. Despite frostiness of US-Soviet relations and the almost complete collapse of détente, Carter believed it to be in the American

¹⁴⁹ Memo Bray to Brzezinski, “BBC Cuts”, International Communication Agency Memorandum, October 4, 1979, Box 77, 6-77-3 United Kingdom 8-12/79, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹⁵⁰ Memo Henze to Aaron, “BBC Cuts”, October 10, 1979, Box 77, 6-77-3 United Kingdom 8-12/79, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹⁵¹ Memo Shulman to Vance, “Possible Conclusions of a Soviet Policy Review”, December 14, 1979, Volume XII, Afghanistan, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁵² Brement to Aaron and Brzezinski, “The Soviets in Afghanistan”, December 21, 1979, Volume XII, Afghanistan, FRUS, 1977-1980

interest to defending the SALT-II Treaty even after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan¹⁵³. This was one of Carter's signature foreign policy achievements and he remained keen to preserve it.

Over the course of December, the administration had actually bolstered its efforts to reach the Muslim nationalities of the Soviet Union. At a high-level SCC meeting on December 11, proposals to improve broadcasting to Muslims were considered by those in attendance, and both the urgency of the matter and Carter's own direct concern with the issue were highlighted. There was an admission that over the previous year some serious deficiencies had held the program back, and efforts to correct these deficiencies had moved too slowly, especially with regards to including Azeri language broadcasts. Brzezinski also stressed Radio Liberty's "enormous potential for impact on the 50 million Soviet Muslims and the meagre resources which had been applied to this task to date". Indeed only 46 people, including secretaries and researchers, were working on RL's project for reaching the Soviet nationalities, and providing for only three and a half hours per week of original programming in 7 languages. Brzezinski conceded that an expansion of this project would not be as easy as it was for East European languages or for Russian but believed, "initial exploratory work left him confident that people for broadcasting staffs could be found, researchers hired and trained and available research materials much more effectively exploited". The group unanimously decided to take steps to improve the content of broadcasts to the Soviet Central Asian republics, with broadcasts in Uzbek, Tatar, Kazakh, Azeri, Tajik, Turkmen and Kirgiz all being endorsed¹⁵⁴.

Following this meeting, Brzezinski urged Reinhardt, "ICA should review all of its available assets—specialized publication material, speaker projects, library programs, and the Voice of America's broadcast activity—with a view to adapting these to the objective of communicating the commonality of values, spiritual and secular, which link our society with those of the Moslem world... As I have stressed in previous memoranda, your efforts should include information about Soviet treatment of Islam and the situation of Muslims in the Soviet Union. Crude comparisons between Soviet and American practices should, of course, be avoided, since the two situations are not analogous. It is the fundamental approach and attitude to Islamic values—as well as active Soviet oppression of them—which need to be

¹⁵³ Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970's*, p290

¹⁵⁴ Summary of Conclusions of a Special Coordination Committee (Intelligence) Meeting, "Broadcasting and Related Issues", December 11, 1979, SCC Meetings, 1978-1980, Volume XX, Eastern Europe, FRUS, 1977-1980

stressed”.¹⁵⁵ However, OMB continued to put the brakes on these efforts by withholding money from RFE/RL, with a frustrated Henze again bringing the matter to Brzezinski’s attention. Henze believed all agencies were on board with the new outreach to the Muslims of the Soviet Union, but that OMB was “dragging its feet”¹⁵⁶. Brzezinski in turn appealed to Walter Mondale and urged him to personally intervene, believing the vice president to be a supporter of the broadcasting program and requesting money be released “to improve the content and depth of Radio Liberty broadcasts in Uzbek, Tatar, Kazakh, Azeri, Tajik, Turkmen and Kirgiz”, stating, “recent developments in Afghanistan have underscored the importance of moving rapidly” on this matter¹⁵⁷.

“Are we doing enough?”

As the clock ticked down on Jimmy Carter’s time in the White House, US-Soviet relations were marked by a tension and hostility virtually unknown over the previous decade, and US foreign policy faced a diverse and volatile set of challenges as the new decade dawned. Carter didn’t shy away from these challenges, telling Congress, “we face some of the most serious challenges in the history of this nation”. Carter identified the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a threat to global stability, and the ongoing hostage crisis in Iran as an “affront to civilised people everywhere”. But the president continued to strike an idealistic tone, “it always has been the essence of America that we want to move on - we understand that prosperity, progress, and most of all peace cannot be had by standing still”¹⁵⁸. In response to the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan, the Carter administration had taken a series of measures directed at the Soviets, including a call for a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, a delay in the ratification of the SALT-II treaty in the Senate, the recall of US ambassador to the Soviet Union, a suspension of the opening of the new US consulate in Kiev, and an urgent stepping up of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty broadcasts into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union¹⁵⁹. Despite the apparent strength of the Soviet juggernaut, US intelligence continued to report a slowing of the Soviet economy, with 1980 shaping up to be a “year of growth far short of rates envisioned in the original 1976-80 plan,

¹⁵⁵ Memo Brzezinski to Reinhardt, “Long-Term Cultural and Informational Effort in Islam”, December 12, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XXX, Public Diplomacy, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁵⁶ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Broadcasting to Muslims - Need to Push OMB to Release Funds”, December 19, 1979, CC Meetings, 1979-1980, Volume XX, Eastern Europe, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁵⁷ Memo Brzezinski to Mondale, “Broadcasting to the Muslim World”, December 28, 1979, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁵⁸ “Jimmy Carter State of the Union Address to Congress”, January 21, 1980, Box 3, Folder 1, Speech File 1980, Anthony Lake Papers, LoC

¹⁵⁹ Memo Brzezinski to Mondale, Vance and Brown, “Results of the NSC Meeting”, January 2, 1980, National Security Council Institutional Files, Volume XII, Afghanistan, FRUS, 1977-1980

with fuel shortages and farm output hampering economic growth¹⁶⁰. While Carter and his administration remained hopeful of a second term, all the energy appeared to be on the right of the political spectrum, as Ronald Reagan launched his campaign to become president. Reagan was relentless in his criticism of détente and the direction of US foreign policy under Carter, but during 1980 the administration continued on a path of stiffening resolve toward Soviet belligerence.

Nevertheless, as the year wore on Paul Henze brooded, lamenting missed opportunities. As the Carter administration moved through what proved to be its final year, the battle-weary Cold Warrior remained unbowed yet carrying a slight sense of despondency as he looked back upon the previous few years. As the Soviet nationalities specialist on the NSC he had had the full backing of Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who shared Henze's hawkish enthusiasm for exploiting ethnic tension inside the Soviet Union as part of US Cold War strategy. Yet by mid 1980 he felt frustrated, his efforts bogged down in bureaucratic infighting, budgetary disputes, and strategic disagreements. Henze had become a driving force within the administration for a more aggressive posture towards the Soviets, a posture which included paying closer attention to internal developments within the USSR and assessing whether there was scope for US policy to affect these developments in any way. But as Carter moved towards the end of his presidency, and criticism of his foreign policy escalated, these ideas still remained largely outside the mainstream of foreign policy thinking and somewhat controversial inside the US policymaking establishment.

Henze's attempts to expand the American reach to the Soviet republics were also being stifled by budget battles and red tape. Brzezinski's pleas to Mondale for assistance had come to nothing, and Henze could feel his frustration building, "does the administration really mean what it says?", he griped to Brzezinski in January 1980, "one month ago today the SCC endorsed proposals for expanding broadcasting to Muslims and the President approved these actions two days later. Radio Liberty still hasn't received a penny of the money needed to do the job. OMB's bookkeepers pinch pennies, question the intent of the SCC actions and think up reasons why the money shouldn't be provided". For Henze, radio broadcasting lay at the heart of his plans for reaching the Soviet nationalities, for provoking them into increased demands for autonomy and thus agitate the Soviet

¹⁶⁰ CIA NFAC report, "Review of Soviet Internal Affairs", January 15, 1980, Box 68, 23-68-1 USSR Leadership 1/11-80, Larrabee Subject File, Staff Material- Europe, USSR, and East/West, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

authorities. He felt he had staked his entire time in the White House on making this a success, and he knew his direct boss on the NSC also believed in the validity of the project. Henze told Brzezinski that their credibility was suffering as a result of the ongoing funding debacle, and he was beginning to doubt the viability of the whole venture.

In particular, efforts in Central Asia had reached a “pitifully limited output now because Soviet Muslim broadcasting has been kept on a starvation diet for years”, despite there being “enormous potential for expansion” with “RL’s motley team of (mostly aging) Tatars, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs, Tadzhiks, Turkmen and Kirgiz motivated as they have never been before”. In a recent verbal spat, Henze had informed OMB “for the umpteenth time...that all radio broadcasting had been short-changed for years and everything needed to be expanded”. Henze was now downcast at the entire direction of the administration, delivering a damning verdict to Brzezinski, “the Administration’s program for expanding radio broadcasting will soon be exposed as hollow rhetoric unless ample funds are assured... One of the most serious shortcomings of this Administration, when it is able to formulate good ideas and take decisions, has been its incapacity to perform, to implement, to carry out what it says it wants done. We seem to have another striking instance of it in the broadcasting field”¹⁶¹.

The ongoing hostage crisis in Iran was damaging morale inside the White House, and in the country at large. The feeling of powerlessness only intensified when an attempt to rescue the hostages ended in disaster, a further example of the “collapse of US power and prestige”¹⁶². Despite the chaotic international environment, the Carter administration was showing real assertiveness towards the Soviets by 1980, but the feeling of drift was even evident among the anti-Soviet hawks, and hard-liners like Henze were becoming exasperated. This feeling was encapsulated in a memo which Henze fired off to Brzezinski in April, entitled, “Dissidence in Eastern Europe and the USSR - Are We Doing Enough?”. The memo served as an outline of their achievements in aiding and promoting dissidence in the Soviet sphere over the previous few years and offering suggestions on how they could move things forward. Leading with the claim that, “on the demonstrative and declarative level the record of the Carter Administration is second to none in the past fifteen years”, Henze praised Carter for his public championing and identification with the cause of many high-

¹⁶¹ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Money for Radio Expansion”, January 11, 1980, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁶² Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970’s*, p293

profile dissidents inside the Soviet Union, his successful exchange of dissidents for Soviet spies, and the publicity Carter's human rights policies had garnered for the dissidents languishing behind the Iron Curtain. However, Henze highlighted the difficulties the administration had faced in transferring the rhetoric and public support of human rights into concrete policy, and the lack of funding which had aggravated this problem, telling Brzezinski the "allocation of resources—both manpower and money—to programs encouraging dissidence and serving the needs of dissidence has not been proportionate to the high level of attention the Administration has given this field in statements and demonstrative actions...No new operational instrumentalities have been created for implementing human rights policies, sustaining research effort and channelling and coordinating human rights initiatives on a self-propelled basis".

Henze turned to his own pet project, attempts to reach the Soviet nationalities and promote national self-determination within the Soviet Union. He went on, "our most valuable instruments for communication with Eastern Europe and the USSR are the big radios. New investment in transmitters has not been matched by comparable investment in programming...manpower rejuvenation and expansion of programming and research support have continued to be postponed. The effect is evident in decline in Radio Liberty listenership in the USSR. New investment for programming improvement is urgently needed. This has been strikingly demonstrated as we have taken up the question of broadcasting in Muslim languages, where Radio Liberty's current level of performance is only a fraction of its potential". Henze reported that he was pleased with the increased funding and distribution of the book and periodical program in the Soviet Union, and he made the case that the US should always be looking for new opportunities to exploit Soviet weaknesses, as demonstrated by the, "realization of the importance of Islam, national self-assertion among the Muslim peoples of the USSR (as well as Christian peoples such as the Balts, Ukrainians and Georgians) and the ferment and feedback generated by events in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, are developments which have highlighted new opportunities. Existing resources are inadequate to meet these opportunities".

Henze believed that the programs for exploiting dissidence in Eastern Europe and the USSR were the most cost-effective activity undertaken by the US government, and he called for an annual budgetary increase of 3-5% in order to make them even more effective, as well as the expansion and refinement of radio broadcasting into the Soviet empire. He also wished to see an expansion of publication and distribution operations, believing even a

modest increment of funding would “enable existing publication and distribution projects to perform at a much higher level of efficiency”. Likewise, a “tape-cassette distribution program should be developed to augment existing book and magazine programs; there is increasing evidence that cassettes are popular and effective in the Communist world”. He identified nationality groups and areas which were currently poorly served by these programs as, “the Baltic States, especially the Lithuanians, the Ukrainians, and the Caucasus, including the Georgians, Armenians and Muslim peoples”. And he also asked for more focus on religious affairs in the Soviet republics, stating “religion, and not only Islam, should be given higher priority for planning new operations...the potential of persistent Orthodox tradition in the Ukraine and among Russians as a focal point for anti-Communist nationalism (or nationalism that regards Communism as irrelevant) needs to be examined”. Brzezinski informed Henze it was a “good memo” and instructed him to consider ways in which his suggestions could be implemented¹⁶³.

Despite Henze’s pessimism, hard-line groups within the administration maintained an interest in the internal nature of the Soviet regime right throughout 1980, with interest in the Muslim areas of the Soviet empire heightening after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Nationalities Working Group continued to meet during the final months of the Carter presidency, always probing for new ways to exploit Soviet vulnerabilities. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had provided the US with a stern test, but for Henze the development could lead to opportunity in the form of increased ferment among the Soviet Union’s own Muslim populations. In April 1980, he told a meeting of the Nationalities Working Group that Brzezinski “obviously wants us to stir up what actions we can”¹⁶⁴. There was a growing belief that the nationalities were becoming an important front of resistance to the Soviet authorities.

As relations between the US and the USSR became more strained over the course of 1980, the Kremlin moved to intensify its campaign against dissidents inside the Soviet Union. The focus of this campaign was on the human rights activists of the Helsinki network, with famous dissident Andrei Sakharov being exiled to Gorky, removing one of the most outspoken leaders of the Soviet human rights movement, and dozens of other activists being arrested and imprisoned. The US embassy reported that the dissidents were becoming disheartened

¹⁶³ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Dissidence in Eastern Europe and the USSR—Are We Doing Enough?”, April 17, 1980, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe, FRUS, 1977-1980

¹⁶⁴ Kalinovsky, “Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennisen school, and the crisis of détente,” p223

and less optimistic that the movement would be able to continue in its current form. The embassy also reported “the current climate of cynicism and apathy among students has resulted in fewer young people being drawn to the dissidents. Those who do become activists are attracted to the nationalist and religious dissident movements, which apparently have a broader base than does dissent over human rights...the human rights movement has lost much of its sense of purpose and is being forced into a period of relative inactivity”¹⁶⁵.

This growing nationalist dissidence continued to provide a relatively untapped source of instability for the Soviet government, one which the NWG was determined to explore further. An in-depth report entitled “Muslims in the Soviet Union” had been produced by the FNAC that year, which examined the current status of the Muslim minorities in the USSR, demographic trends, and prospects for the future. The report stated, “for decades Soviet leaders have tried with little success to foster the assimilation of the Muslims into the dominant Slavic culture. Tension between Muslims and Slavs persists and may increase as Muslims, because of the growth in their numbers relative to Slavs, necessarily become more involved in industry and defense”. However, “religious consciousness (as opposed to cultural consciousness) is relatively low among Soviet Muslims, and the tide of religious fundamentalism washing over the Muslim world has had little impact in the USSR”.

The report went on, “Soviet officials have displayed little overt concern that the unrest among the Islamic nations along its southern border might spill over into the Soviet Union, however some Soviet diplomats have attempted to justify the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by alluding to such concern. Considering their self-serving nature, such comments have little credibility”. The report admitted there was no evidence of a pan-Muslim movement or network of Muslim dissidents in the USSR, and that the “vast array of Soviet power stands ready to smite any Soviet Muslims who get too far out of line”. Nevertheless, “Soviet nationalities’ policies have generally aimed at building a supranational socialist consciousness among all Soviet peoples”, but “have not worked anywhere as well as was hoped, and they have hardly made a dent in the ethnic consciousness of the Muslims...the large mass of unassimilated Muslims in the belly of the Soviet body politic is making Soviet

¹⁶⁵ CIA Special Analysis, “USSR: Suppression of Dissidents”, Summer 1980, Box 59, 23-59-4 USSR Dissidents/Defectors: 6/79-11/80, Brement Subject File, Staff Material- Europe, USSR, and East/West, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

leaders increasingly uneasy. Like a large a growing but still benign tumour, it is not causing them any harm but neither, they fear, will it do them any good”¹⁶⁶.

Indeed, there was mounting evidence that Muslims in the Central Asian Soviet republics were picking up Iranian religious broadcasts, with the rise of Khomeini spurring an Islamic revival in Turkmenistan in particular. RFE/RL reported on this spillover effect of Iranian broadcasting, claiming “a recent publication by the chief of propaganda and agitation in Central Asia’s republic of Turkmenistan reveals that...Iranian religious broadcasts were being heard by the population...and were helping to uphold Islamic traditions among the local population. Moreover, tape recordings were made of these broadcasts by Turkmen mullahs and played before Muslims in other parts of the republic”¹⁶⁷. With this in mind, the Nationalities Working Group continued to look at options for exploiting these underlying tensions. In June, Charles Walter, a member of the NWG, contacted Henze with information regarding efforts by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, an open source intelligence arm of the CIA, to improve its knowledge and expand its reach. Walter informed Henze that the FBIS was expanding its “capability to exploit the media of the Muslim world and the nationality groups of the Soviet Union by recruiting additional personnel in the United States and abroad”. The FBIS would be producing research files for monitoring statements by selected Muslim leaders, governments and parties. These files would also include each of the Soviet republics and major topics related to nationalities issues¹⁶⁸. Even as the Carter presidency wound down, it is clear that a group of policymakers fully intended to keep the focus on Soviet nationality problems in the years ahead and were planning and recruiting accordingly.

Looking ahead

Over the summer 1980, the Carter administration began to watch events in Poland with increasing alarm as wide-spread strikes threatened to destabilise the Polish communist regime, and the threat of Soviet military intervention grew stronger by the day. Poland was a key state in Eastern Europe and deserved close attention. There was a feeling within the administration that the Soviets faced several various high-profile difficulties, curtailing their

¹⁶⁶ CIA- FNAC Research Paper, “Muslims in the USSR”, February 5, 1980, Box 68, 23-68-3 USSR Nationalities 10/78-7/80, Larrabee Subject File, Staff Material- Europe, USSR, and East/West, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹⁶⁷ RFE/RL Research Paper, “Spillover Effects of Religious Broadcasts in Iran on Soviet Muslims”, April 14, 1980, Box 83, 6-83-4 USSR 5/80, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹⁶⁸ Memo Walter to Henze, “FBIS Media Collection on the Arc of Crisis and Soviet Nationalities”, June 3, 1980, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

options in Poland. Steven Larrabee of the NSC informed Brzezinski, “the potential for unrest in Poland has always been fairly high, but it is accentuated now by the fact that the Soviets are particularly vulnerable”. Larrabee believed Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, and the upcoming Olympic Games in Moscow and CSCE Conference in Madrid meant the Soviets hands were tied for now, but the administration should continue to “watch the situation closely”¹⁶⁹. Indeed, the growing unrest in Poland would become a bigger issue as 1980 wore on, and by December the administration genuinely feared that the Soviet tanks would roll into Warsaw. The period also marked the 40th anniversary of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states during World War II, and leaders of the Baltic American community were eager for Carter to clarify the US non-recognition policy towards these states, in light of US involvement in the Helsinki process which had ratified the existing borders of the post-war settlement¹⁷⁰. The Baltic situation agitated Henze, as did the continued lack of funding for his desired radio and propaganda programs, reporting to Brzezinski, “it is exactly six months today since the President approved the recommendations of the 11 December 1979 SCC on expanding broadcasting to Muslim audiences. Not much has happened as a result. VOA has expanded some of its broadcasts... With RFE/RL the picture is much worse. Not a penny has been allocated to expanding Muslim broadcasting staffs and no new transmitters have been leased or otherwise secured”. Henze also revealed that the Board for International Broadcasting had ordered the relocation of all the Baltic services in Munich back to the US. Henze felt, “the Balts are going to be up in arms...A fine reward for the Balts in the 40th anniversary year of their takeover by the Soviets—move RL’s Baltic services back to the US”.

For Henze, this all added up to even more frustration, “I despair of this Administration’s capacity to face up to these issues now. We could hold another SCC—if you want to get out front. Short of that, I plan simply to continue calling attention to the problem, pressing where we can to get something done, bit by bit. But we can’t expect much from RFE/RL until they get some money and stop being harassed by BIB (Board for International Broadcasting) on tangential issues. They have squeezed out what they can from presently available resources. They have a whole list of good Central Asians, etc. ready to hire ... but instead they have to spend their time drawing up plans to move the Balts back to New York ...”¹⁷¹. There was also more bad news regarding the CIA’s book and publication

¹⁶⁹ Memo Larrabee to Brzezinski, “Strikes in Poland: A Warning Sign?”, July 3, 1980, Box 65, 6-65-2, Country File, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL

¹⁷⁰ Letter to President Carter, Joint Baltic American National Committee, May 2, 1980, Box 55, 15-55-2 USSR 5/80, Brzezinski Office File, Chron Country, Brzezinski Material, National Security Affairs, JCPL.

¹⁷¹ Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “Expanding Radio Broadcasting”, June 13, 1980, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, FRUS, 1977-1980

program, with Henze telling Brzezinski his contacts at the CIA had informed him, “they had reached the end of the line in their efforts to persuade OMB to provide adequate funds to keep the book and publication program going in FY1981—OMB had simply turned them down... It is appalling—as we all know—that these excellent programs should have fallen into such jeopardy at a time like this”¹⁷².

As the Carter administration entered its final months, there was reflection on the goals they had achieved, and plans made for a second term which would never transpire. For hardliners such as Brzezinski, Odom and Henze there were mixed feelings. In September 1980, Odom crafted a meticulous appraisal of the administration’s foreign policy entitled, “East-West Relations: A Formula for U.S. Policy in 1981 and Beyond”. Odom believed that East-West relations were moving from “Era I”, which consisted of “1945 to the mid-1970s (U.S. dominance and Pax Americana)” to “Era II”, which was still being defined and was dependent on how “Soviet power made itself felt”. He believed US foreign policy was marked by three “fissures”; the political utility of military force, East-West versus North-South primacy, and the growing incongruities between economic power and military security responsibilities. For Odom, “these fissures prevent a foreign policy consensus on East-West relations and mean that in the 1970s, and perhaps into the 1980s, no U.S. policy toward the USSR can have broad and constant support.... The primary task for U.S. foreign and defence policy in the early 1980s, therefore, is to complete the transition to Era II peacefully and to give that era a definition and direction appropriate to changed realities”.

Odom felt a return both to a period of US military preponderance or the détente era of the 1970s were impossible, and the US must now “engage with the USSR competitively”. Samuel Huntington had outlined four areas for this competitive engagement; the maintenance of military deterrence, the containment of Soviet expansion, offers of politically conditioned economic benefits, and the reduction of Soviet influence over client states, bloc states, and minority nationalities in the USSR. For Odom, the nationalities problems of the Soviet Union were of the utmost importance moving forward, and he felt more work was needed in this area, telling Brzezinski, “it is time to reduce the spheres of Soviet influence, and the opportunities are large”, on nationalities and minorities inside the Soviet Union, “we can do more on the nationality question within the USSR. The human rights policy is, of course, already a weapon in our arsenal. In an age of nationalism, there is nothing permanent about Soviet “internationalism” and Soviet borders—something we can imply and encourage others

¹⁷² Memo Henze to Brzezinski, “CIA’s Book and Publication Program”, June 2, 1980, National Security Affairs, Volume XX, Eastern Europe 1977-1980, FRUS, 1977-1980

to say explicitly... “Resistance to Soviet internationalism” is encouraged wherever states and nations find it oppressive and unwanted”¹⁷³.

However, this was a blueprint which would have to be taken up by a different president. Carter lost his re-election bid in November 1980 against the conservative insurgent Ronald Reagan, who promised to deliver on all the promises Carter had made and not kept. The incoming Reagan administration would adopt a highly confrontational posture towards the Soviet Union, with a determined focus on promoting internal change within the Soviet system itself. Olav Njolstad has expertly detailed the consistencies between the Carter and the Reagan administrations in their approach to the Soviet Union, arguing that in many respects the Reagan administration simply picked up where the Carter White House had left off, stating “in certain important policy areas - such as defence, containment of Soviet regional expansion, economic diplomacy and ideological warfare - the changes in US Cold War policy that were to characterise the first half of the 1980s really began, or had their roots, in the late Carter years”¹⁷⁴.

For Paul Henze, despite a frustrating end to his time on the NSC, along with Brzezinski he felt he had opened an avenue for US Cold War strategy which had been previously closed off to American policymakers; the exploitation of internal Soviet weaknesses, with a particular focus on the nationalities of the USSR. In late 1980, he told Brzezinski that the most encouraging aspect of “this field during the past year has been the extent to which interest in nationalities in the USSR...has spread within and outside the government...Even if no further stimulus were given in the field from the NSC level, it is still difficult to envision a return to the condition of relative lethargy (and positive aversion in some quarters) that prevailed at the beginning of this administration”¹⁷⁵. This would prove to be an astute observation, as the incoming Reagan administration pushed US foreign policy further down the road of confrontation, intent on exploiting the internal weaknesses of the Soviet Union, and a new chapter of the Cold War began.

¹⁷³ Memo Odom to Brzezinski, “East-West Relations: A Formula for US Policy in 1981 and Beyond”, September 3, 1980, Box 26, USSR General (1981-1983) 1/5, Series II USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

¹⁷⁴ Olav Njolstad, “The Carter Legacy: Entering the Second Era of the Cold War”, Ed. Olav Njolstad, *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation*, (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2004), p218

¹⁷⁵ Henze, quoted in Kalinovsky, “Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen school, and the crisis of détente,” p224

Promoting Change from Within

Having initially been critical of the Helsinki accords and the human rights focus of Jimmy Carter's presidency, Ronald Reagan began to see the importance of human rights to the moral renewal of American foreign policy as a method for clearly differentiating between the authoritarian nature of the Soviet bloc and the liberal democracy of the United States¹⁷⁶. Reagan was a man of ideas, and at the heart of his foreign policy vision lay powerful beliefs about the importance of human freedom, and these ideas would form an important basis for the strategy his national security staff developed towards the Soviet system in the early days of the administration¹⁷⁷. His administration paid close attention to the internal nature of the Soviet regime and identified the oppression and resultant resentment of nationality groups as a weakness within the Soviet system. If Jimmy Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski had instigated a new phase in US Cold War strategy by shining the spotlight onto human rights abuses and the nationalities question inside the Soviet empire, then Reagan and his administration aimed not to merely continue these policies, but to amplify them further.

Yet as the curtain fell on the 1970s and the decade drew to a close, the sense of US decline grew ever more palpable. While the economy continued to stutter, a series of foreign policy disasters had left American standing on the world stage appearing ever more precarious, its self-assumed leadership role ever more uncertain. The world watched as Soviet tanks rolled into Afghanistan in late 1979 while the US looked on helplessly, and as the Carter administration horrifically botched its attempt to end the Iran hostage crisis in 1980. The United States was reeling and appeared rudderless, with the threat of an impending Soviet knockout blow appearing very real. The malaise of the 1970s had assaulted the American character and damaged its international prestige and heightening Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union had thrust superpower rivalry back to the fore. The American people had looked to Jimmy Carter for change in 1976 and now they turned to Ronald Reagan, drawn

¹⁷⁶ Snyder, p135-174. See also, See for example Tamar Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights", *Foreign Affairs*, summer 1986.

¹⁷⁷ For the debates on Reagan's desired purpose towards the Soviet Union and whether he wanted to "win" or "end" the Cold War, see, Artemy Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle, "Explanations for the End of the Cold War," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Artemy Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle (London: Routledge, 2014), Jacob Weisberg, *Ronald Reagan* (New York: Times Books, 2016); Tyler Esno, "Reagan's Economic War on the Soviet Union," *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 2 (April 2018): 281-304; Melvyn Leffler, "Ronald Reagan: What Mattered Most", *Texas National Security Review*, Volume 1, Issue 3, (May 2018); James Graham Wilson's *The Triumph of Improvisation* is probably the most well-balanced and thoughtful interpretation of Reagan's role currently available.

to his sunny Californian conservatism and resolute belief that America's best days were ahead of it.

The former governor of California's path to the White House was long and meandering, but along the way he had developed a deeply-felt set of core values and beliefs about the world, which he brought with him to Washington. Foremost among these ideas was the simple belief that American fortunes would soon ascend, and it was actually the Soviet leadership in Moscow who should be more concerned about the direction of their country. Reagan believed that communism was a spent force, that the weaknesses of the USSR's economy were glaring, and that Soviet society was beset with a deep spiritual malady. After sweeping Carter aside in the 1980 election, Reagan assembled a team of policymakers around him who shared these views, policymakers who looked across the Iron Curtain and saw an adversary which was struggling to contain the powerful and conflicting forces within its society; economic problems were emerging, the nationalities of the USSR were restless, dissidence was growing, and calls for greater autonomy within the Soviet republics were mounting. Reagan officials immediately set about crafting policies to explore and exploit these weaknesses and promote changes inside the Soviet Union which would serve US interests. After the long years of détente, the Cold War was back.

Reagan's worldview

Ronald Reagan instinctively believed that the Soviet Union wasn't long for this world. His confidence lay in his convictions about communism, which he had labelled a "disease" which mankind must survive. "Communism is neither an economic or political system" Reagan said in 1975, "it is a form of insanity - a temporary aberration which will one day disappear from the earth because it is contrary to human nature"¹⁷⁸. Reagan had developed his views of communism over the course of many decades, as his life took various twists and turns. Originally an FDR and Truman Democrat and firm supporter of the New Deal, Reagan began to move to the right over the course of the early Cold War years. As an actor in Hollywood during the 1940's and 1950's he first encountered communism, and while serving as the president of the Screen Actors Guild he was horrified by the growing influence of communist radicals in the movie industry. As his acting work dried up, he gained employment with General Electric (GE), for whom he travelled across America giving motivational speeches to thousands of the company's employees. During these lengthy journeys, Reagan embarked

¹⁷⁸ "Radio Address of May 1975", Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, Eds, *Reagan In His Own Hand* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p10-12

on a period of deep reading, reflection, and self-education, which helped crystallise his ideas on the virtues of free market economics and limited government, and the abject evils of communism¹⁷⁹. As the embodiment of this ideology, Reagan viewed the Soviet Union as an anomaly in human history, and a very dangerous anomaly. As far back as 1962, Reagan described Soviet communism as “a single world-wide force dedicated to the destruction of our free enterprise system and the creation of a world socialist state”. On assuming the presidency, these views remained in place, and indeed had only hardened over the decades. At his first press conference as president Reagan declared, “I know of no leader of the Soviet Union since the revolution, and including the present leadership, that has not repeated... their determination that their goal must be the promotion of world revolution and a one-world socialist or communist state”¹⁸⁰.

Allied to his aversion to communism and suspicion of Soviet intentions, Reagan also held a profound belief in the American future and the eventual triumph of its values, which he deemed to be universal. His belief in the inherent goodness and potential of America was utterly unshakeable. He believed in a system of government which enshrined individual freedom, human dignity, and the creativity of the free market. He was also deeply religious, having been raised in his mother’s Disciples of Christ church in Illinois and embraced evangelicalism in adulthood, all of which implanted within him a missionary impulse and the penchant for seeing the world in terms of “good” and “evil”¹⁸¹. For Ronald Reagan, the Cold War was a spiritual conflict. Behind the simmering geopolitical tensions, the escalating arms race, and the Third World flashpoints, there lay a deeper battle between good and evil, God and the godless. For Reagan, there was absolutely no doubt about which side would eventually triumph in this epic struggle. Reagan had identified the atheism of the Soviet Union as a key weakness in the communist system, going as far as to declare religion the ‘Achilles heel’ of the Soviet Union, much as Brzezinski had characterised internal ethnic nationalism in the same way¹⁸². This religious faith fused with a deeply held conviction that

¹⁷⁹ For an excellent history of Reagan’s time at General Electric and how he formulated his political ideas during this period see, Thomas W. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)

¹⁸⁰ Keith L. Shimko, “Reagan on the Soviet Union and the Nature of International Conflict”, *Political Psychology*, Vol 13, No. 3, September 1992, p362

¹⁸¹ Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper, 2004), p58-59, 141-142. For more on Reagan’s religious beliefs, which were in some ways quite unorthodox, see Andrew Preston’s excellent, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), p579-581

¹⁸² “I have a feeling... that religion may very well turn out to be the Soviets’ Achilles’ heel”. Reagan in a letter to John Koehler, an old friend and long-time reporter for the Associated Press, 9th July 1981. Peter Schweizer, *Reagan’s War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism*. (Doubleday, New York, 2002), p137

America had a special mission in the world, to spread democracy and free market capitalism, and to liberate oppressed people everywhere¹⁸³. These ideas shaped Reagan's worldview. As David Foglesong states, these beliefs "would underpin his approach to the Soviet Union, including faith that God had a plan for him and for the world, a belief in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, and a conviction that America was preordained to carry the torch of freedom in the world"¹⁸⁴. It was a potent set of beliefs.

Despite his eternal optimism, Reagan believed America had lost its way in recent times and was currently suffering from an infirmity which was doing much harm to the nation's standing in the world, allowing the USSR to steal a march on them. He was eager for a course correction. Reagan believed the US had been negotiating with the Soviets from a position of weakness, allowing their rival to bully America during arms control negotiations and embark on a more adventurist approach in the Third World. Nevertheless, alongside these views Reagan also held a genuine proclivity for a more peaceful world, he had no desire for military confrontation and utterly abhorred nuclear weapons and longed for their complete elimination. Reagan resolved his conflicting impulses through the doctrine of "peace through strength", the belief that America needed to rejuvenate its military and diplomacy in order to foster and guarantee a more peaceful world order. As James Graham Wilson explains, "Reagan was torn between a "crusade for freedom" and "peace through strength". A "crusade for freedom" aimed to cast the Cold War struggle in terms of moral clarity... "Peace through strength", for its part, meant restoring America's strength, irrespective of changes to the Soviet system"¹⁸⁵.

Reagan wished to see the end of communism and the spread of American values, but regardless of his sharp criticism of the Soviets Union and his acerbic rhetoric, he remained very reluctant to actually employ military force and remained in favour of arms reductions as a way of de-escalating tensions. He was eager to reach out to Soviet leaders such as Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, keen to establish a rapport from the very earliest days of his administration, despite the hardliners around him being aghast at these overtures¹⁸⁶. Reagan aimed not for the overthrow of the Soviet Union, but for the peaceful evolution of its system into something less menacing, and his administration was guided by this principle¹⁸⁷. When asked by an aide in 1980 why he was running for president Reagan

¹⁸³ David Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, (Cambridge, 2007), p174-177

¹⁸⁴ Foglesong, p176

¹⁸⁵ James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p15

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p5

¹⁸⁷ For 'triumphalist' works which place a crusading Ronald Reagan at the heart of an American Cold War victory see, Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and*

replied, “to end the Cold War.” I am not sure how, he declared, “but there has to be a way”.¹⁸⁸

Reagan was a complicated man: upbeat, immensely likeable, congenial and warm, yet somewhat guarded, remote, and reluctant to allow anyone into his inner world¹⁸⁹. His managerial style was decidedly hands-off, and his staff were often only given vague instructions. He has also been criticised, both then and now, for lacking strategic insights and a sophisticated view of the outside world. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1980s, many in America’s foreign policy establishment viewed him as something of an intellectual lightweight. This image has been challenged by historians such as John Lewis Gaddis, Will Inboden and Hal Brands, who have recently pushed back against this view, arguing that Reagan possessed sharp strategic instincts and a coherent agenda for implementing them¹⁹⁰. While Reagan was clearly disinterested in the minutiae of policymaking, Hal Brands claims, “Reagan was actually well-equipped for the challenges he faced. The president had good strategic instincts, in that he possessed an intuitive ability to get to the heart of difficult issues, and a keen sense of how individual policies related to broader designs... He also had the confidence to think big - to challenge prevailing orthodoxies and chart potentially ground-breaking courses of action”¹⁹¹. No less than Henry Kissinger, who had a strained relationship with the president following Reagan’s withering critiques of détente during the 1970s, asserted “Reagan put forward a foreign policy doctrine of great coherence and considerable intellectual power. He possessed an extraordinary intuitive rapport with the wellsprings of American motivation. At the same time, he understood the essential brittleness of the Soviet system, a perception which ran contrary to most expert opinion, even in his own conservative camp”¹⁹². Years later, Gorbachev himself described Reagan as

Final Triumph Over Communism (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Regan Books, 2006); Francis H. Marlo, *Planning Reagan’s War: Conservative Strategists and America’s Cold War Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012).

¹⁸⁸ Thomas C. Reed, *At the Abyss: An Insider’s History of the Cold War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), p234-35.

¹⁸⁹ For profiles of Reagan and his beloved wife Nancy, see, Nancy Reagan, with William Novak, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989); Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000); Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999).

¹⁹⁰ See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, Revised Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p342-380, Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014, p102-104 and William Inboden, “Grand Strategy and Petty Squabbles: The Paradox and Lessons of the Reagan NSC”, in Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, Eds., *The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p151-170.

¹⁹¹ Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment*, p70-71

¹⁹² Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p766

“a man of real insight, sound political judgement, and courage”¹⁹³. Reagan came into office armed with a deeply-rooted worldview and an ambitious and sweeping vision for world order. He wished to see the USSR move in directions that were more amenable to democratic and pluralistic governance, more committed to human freedom, and much more open to the self-determination of its national minorities.

Part two of this thesis will explore the Reagan administration’s policies towards the nationalities within the USSR, and examine the part they played, if any, in its overall grand strategy towards the Soviet Union. Not only did Reagan aim to recalibrate the balance of power of world politics in America’s favour, he also came into office with a very powerful set of ideas about the world and about human freedom, and his administration would attempt to craft policies which articulated this vision. The purpose of this section is not to explore every facet of Reagan’s policies towards the Soviet Union, but it will examine the ways in which policymakers inside his administration considered the character of the nationalities problem facing the Soviet leadership as the Cold War moved into what would prove to be its final decade. This work will explore the evolution of policy in this area from the Carter to the Reagan administrations, highlighting the continuities and differences in Reagan-era strategic thinking towards the nationalities and republics of the Soviet Union. It will study the manner in which Reagan officials attempted to increase their knowledge of the Soviet nationalities, discussed the policy options open to the United States to use its limited leverage for the purpose of moving nationalist currents within the USSR in directions more pliable to US interests, and if any consideration was given to the second and third order consequences of these activities.

Grand strategy?

There has been much debate since the USSR collapsed as to whether Reagan and his team wished to actually bring down the entire Soviet Union from within, exploiting internal Soviet difficulties to this end, or whether they merely wished to see the gradual reform of the USSR into a more pluralistic and less restrictive system. This section will also reveal the administration’s focus on Ukraine, which Reagan strategists identified as the key non-Russian republic inside the Soviet Union. It will examine the ways in which they hoped to penetrate this huge territory in order to gain an enhanced understanding of societal inner workings within the autonomous regions of the USSR. Over the course of the 1980s, spurred

¹⁹³ Ken Adelman, *Reagan at Reykjavik: Forty-Eight Hours that Ended the Cold War* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014), p314

on by the Helsinki-inspired human rights revolution of the previous decade, increased attention was being paid by Western human rights activists and the United States Congress to the persecution of dissidents and suppression of national consciousness in Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union. Long a niche interest of ethnic interest groups, Americans of all stripes were now taking notice of the growing nationalist sentiment inside the USSR, and the Reagan administration embarked on a high-profile public diplomacy campaign designed to further pressurise the Soviets in this area.

Reagan viewed the détente era as having emboldened the Soviet Union and undercut American power. While he was open to negotiating with the Soviet leadership, indeed he understood the importance of gaining their trust, Reagan wanted to do so from a position of strength. In the late 1970s, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Carter administration had embarked on a huge military build-up, and in early 1981 the Reagan White House expanded this build-up dramatically, eventually spending a whopping \$1.5 trillion on military hardware and technology over the next five years¹⁹⁴. Reagan wanted to see the US take a more forward-leaning and proactive attitude towards the US-Soviet relationship, challenging Soviet encroachments in the Third World, and embarking on a massive military build-up which he hoped would leave the USSR overextended, while exposing the entrenched contradictions in the Soviet system.

However, for Reagan, the Cold War was about more than just hard military power. It was a war of ideas, between two competing systems and two completely incompatible views of world order. Thus, at the heart of Reagan's foreign policy was a desire to see a victory for the ideas he held dear, ideas about human flourishing and open societies, and he felt these ideas were a vital part of America's Cold War arsenal. He wanted the US to challenge the legitimacy of the Soviet system itself, taking actions which would intensify the internal problems facing the Kremlin, such as publicly supporting dissidents in the Eastern bloc and championing the rights of national determination within the Soviet Union. For Reagan and many of his advisers, ideals and regime types mattered, and his policies towards the Soviet Union would reflect this.

The early months of the incoming administration were utterly chaotic; not only was Reagan the victim of an assassination attempt in March 1981, which saw the president come very close to losing his life, the West Wing was torn asunder with bitter infighting and intrigue.

¹⁹⁴ David Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p281

Although the bulk of Reagan's foreign policy advisers favoured taking a tougher line on Moscow, some were more pugnacious than others, and these hard-liners would eventually clash with more moderate members of the administration. Reagan's first Secretary of State was Alexander Haig, former Chief of Staff in the Nixon and Ford administrations and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Haig was a realist, a protégé of Henry Kissinger, and wanted to get tough on the Soviets. Yet he remained open to negotiations with them, with his focus being the pursuit of interests and great power politics¹⁹⁵. However, Haig was also rude, bullying and domineering, considering himself the final authority on US foreign policy and alienating almost everyone else around him¹⁹⁶. Within the NSC there were Edwin Meese and William Clark, uncompromising hardliners on Soviet issues yet holding almost no foreign policy experience, they found themselves in such lofty positions because they were two old friends and advisers of Reagan from his days as the governor California. Nevertheless, the president trusted their instincts and Clark in particular played an outsized role in crafting foreign policy during his first two years in the White House. Richard Allen, Reagan's first National Security Adviser would leave under a cloud after a year in the role, when Clark officially succeeded him and imposed more discipline on the NSC, before in turn moving on after 20 months to be replaced by Robert 'Bud' McFarlane. Hardliners also headed up the Department of Defense and the CIA, with Harvard graduate Caspar 'Cap' Weinberger overseeing the Pentagon's huge arms build-up, and another of Reagan's old chums William Casey replacing the outgoing Stan Turner at Langley, from where he planned to wage subversive war on the Soviet Union¹⁹⁷.

As with the Carter administration, the State Department was perceived to be the home of the more moderate elements within the national security apparatus. While almost every White House staff experiences a degree of turf war, leaks and backstabbing, the early years of the Reagan presidency are often portrayed as among the worst, with Reagan's aloof approach to managing internal conflict merely lending itself to abounding confusion¹⁹⁸. This element of Reagan's White House would remain a feature rather than a bug over the first year and a half of his first term in office, although the departure of several of the more abrasive personalities, the appointment of George Shultz as Secretary of State in 1982, and the arrival of Soviet expert Jack Matlock to the NSC in mid 1983, would go a long way

¹⁹⁵ See Haig's biography for more on his worldview. Alexander M. Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Scribner, 1984).

¹⁹⁶ Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p5.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p21

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p5

towards smoothing the policymaking process and settling the factious and often acrimonious environment.

Despite the frenzied environment of the West Wing, the Reagan NSC hoped to begin the process of articulating a clear and coherent strategy towards the Soviet Union which would reflect the president's instincts and desire to heighten the tensions within the Eastern bloc. As part of this process, and aside from engaging in economic and military competition, policymakers began to think about the internal strains on the Soviet system and whether it would be possible to craft policies which would make use of them. Elements within the Carter administration, driven by Brzezinski and Henze, had started the process of assessing and analysing the Soviet nationalities, evaluating the extent of the difficulty they posed for Moscow's rule, and establishing a new wave of covert activity designed to reach the ethnic groups of the inner Soviet empire with radio broadcasts and dissident literature. Now members of the Reagan NSC began to explore the possibility of carrying these programs forward, tying them to Reagan's encompassing vision of promoting reform and self-determination within the Soviet Union. Indeed, Colonel Odom's February 1980 memo to Brzezinski in which he called for more work to be done on the Soviet nationalities in the years ahead, was also circulated among the incoming Reagan NSC¹⁹⁹.

Richard Pipes, nationalism, and the Soviet regime

Leading the way on these efforts was Richard Pipes, a well-known professor of imperial Russian history who arrived on secondment at the White House from his academic position at Harvard. Pipes was markedly anti-communist, the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland, deeply antagonistic towards Russian chauvinism. Although a registered Democrat, Pipes was among the group of hawkish Democrats who were appalled at the influence of the New Left and the direction their party was taking towards Cold War policy and began gravitating towards the Republicans towards the end of the 1970s. These "neoconservatives" included public intellectuals such as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, the Cold War liberal senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, who the president tapped to become his ambassador to the United Nations after admiring her work from afar during the campaign²⁰⁰. Like Brzezinski, Pipes also possessed a long-standing interest in the Soviet

¹⁹⁹ Memo Odom to Brzezinski, "East-West Relations: A Formula for US Policy in 1981 and Beyond", September 3, 1980, Box 26, USSR General (1981-1983) 1/5, Series II USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (hereafter RRPL).

²⁰⁰ By far the best and most balanced history of this intellectual movement and their influence on US foreign policy see, Justin Vaisse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge

nationalities, having published a seminal work on the topic in 1964. His book 'The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923' explored the collapse of the tsarist regime and the emergence of a multinational communist state from the ruins, focussing on the Bolsheviks exploitation of nationalist sentiment in Ukraine, Belorussia, the Caucasus and Central Asia to seize power and then expand into the frontier regions of the former Russian empire²⁰¹.

Despite labouring at the heart of America's elite academic establishment, Pipes considered himself an outsider: for his background, for his views on the Soviet Union, and for his increasingly conservative political stance. In particular, he swam against the tides of conventional wisdom within the field of Sovietology, believing most Soviet experts in the West were fundamentally misreading the nature of the Soviet system and the existing threat from expansionism²⁰². He rooted these views in his reading of Russian history and believed the Soviet Union was driven by the same Russian nationalism as the empire it had replaced. Furthermore, he judged the Russian national character to be fundamentally irreconcilable with a Western outlook, believing the Russians to be tougher, more battle hardened, and even willing to endure nuclear war should that catastrophic outcome ever arise²⁰³.

During his research at Harvard, where he interviewed dozens of Soviet emigres, Pipes came to regard the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union as an "explosive force" within Soviet society, a force that detested the regime and sought "separation from everything Russian"²⁰⁴. Pipes was drawn to Reagan's robust foreign policy vision, he believed the president "held a few strong convictions and they guided all his policies", and he was excited at the prospect of crafting concrete proposals towards the Soviet nationalities during his two-year secondment in the White House²⁰⁵. Indeed, one of his first tasks on the NSC was to draw attention to the 60th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Georgia in February 1981, sending a memo to Richard Allen calling for a presidential statement to commemorate the occasion. Pipes stated the, "invasion and incorporation of Georgia into

MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2010). For Kirkpatrick's work on regime types, which caught Reagan's attention, see Jeanne Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary Magazine*, 68 (5 November 1979), 34-45.

²⁰¹ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1964).

²⁰² Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen school, and the crisis of détente," p217

²⁰³ Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War", *Commentary*, 64, (July 1977), p21-34

²⁰⁴ David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁰⁵ Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p164

the USSR marks one of the earliest instances of communist imperialism, the beginning of the process of expansion by military conquest”, he believed a presidential statement would “send a powerful signal to all the national minorities of the Soviet Union ... that we have not forgotten them and put Moscow on notice that ‘national liberation’ is a double-edged sword”²⁰⁶.

Despite Reagan’s strong impulses, and the enthusiasm of Pipes and other hardliners, during the first six months of 1981 the administration was slow to construct a coherent long-term policy towards the USSR, distracted by the ongoing Polish crisis and fear of Soviet intervention there, American economic problems, and the ongoing in-fighting within the White House. Progress had been made in other areas of Soviet policy, with the CIA stepping up funding and arms supplies to anti-communist guerrillas in Third World countries, most notably Afghanistan. These moves were designed to deter further Soviet encroachment in the developing world, making the Soviets pay a higher price for their involvement in places like Nicaragua and Angola, and forming the backbone of what came to be known as the ‘Reagan Doctrine’²⁰⁷. Reagan’s rhetorical onslaught also served as a prong in the administration’s emerging Soviet strategy, alerting the Soviets that Reagan was an American president in a different mould from previous occupants of the White House. In May 1981 Reagan, like his predecessor Carter, delivered the commencement address at Notre Dame, where he told the students, “the years ahead are great ones for this country, for the cause of freedom and the spread of civilization. The West won’t contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won’t bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written”²⁰⁸.

These withering verbal assaults continued, notably with his speech to the British parliament in June 1982 when he told parliamentarians that “the march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history”²⁰⁹ and culminating in his well-known “Evil Empire” speech, which was delivered to the National Association of Evangelicals in March 1983²¹⁰. In February 1981, at the beginning of Reagan’s presidency, the Soviet

²⁰⁶ Memo Richard Pipes to Richard V. Allen, “Anniversary of Soviet Invasion of Georgia”, February 12, 1981, Box 26, USSR General (1981-1983) 1/5, Series II USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁰⁷ Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment*, p80-81

²⁰⁸ “Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame”, May 17, 1981, Public Papers of Ronald Reagan, RRPL

²⁰⁹ “Address to Members of the British Parliament”, June 8, 1982, Public Papers of Ronald Reagan, RRPL

²¹⁰ “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida”, March 8, 1983, Public Papers of Ronald Reagan, RRPL

leadership doesn't appear to have taken Reagan's rhetorical bashings too seriously, with Pipes telling Allen, "confusion and disarray in Moscow over the harsh tones emanating from Washington ... The Soviet Government seems to have decided to treat the anti-Soviet statements of President Reagan ... as political rhetoric which will soon give way to a "realistic" recognition of the need for superpower cooperation"²¹¹. Nevertheless, as the verbal barrage continued, by the middle of the year Soviet leaders were becoming concerned that Reagan's rhetoric was penetrating Soviet society and inciting demands for reform, with Chernenko telling his Politburo colleagues, "especially strong anti-Soviet agitation is performed by the Reagan administration", which he felt was shining the spotlight on issues such as Jewish emigration and leading to increased calls for more tolerant practices from inside the Soviet Union²¹². While Moscow wasn't unduly concerned yet their irritation was rising, and the Reagan administration was indeed playing by different rules. As Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Lawrence Eagleburger outlined to his colleagues during an Interagency Coordinating Committee for US-Soviet Affairs Meeting in March 1981, "this Administration's approach to the Soviets will not be business as usual; there will be changes"²¹³.

Despite the behind the scenes chaos, there was evidence that a multi-front strategy was emerging within the Reagan administration; the CIA continued its covert operations against Soviet interests in the Third World, Reagan ramped up economic pressure through the use of sanctions and by forbidding US firms to work on a new pipeline project in Siberia, and the administration was now growing ever-aware of the need to turn its attention to the political and ideological aspects of its new strategy; exploiting and amplifying the internal pressures of the Soviet Union²¹⁴. Impetus for this objective initially came from the State Department, where officials had been exploring options for promoting change within the Soviet Union since the earliest days of the Reagan administration. Keen to see the promotion of reform inside the Soviet Union placed alongside more traditional military objectives, Paul Wolfowitz, the Director-Designate of the Policy Planning Staff and future architect of the Iraq War in the George W. Bush administration, carefully analysed a draft study on East-West relations prepared by the Policy Planning Staff. The study set out a term

²¹¹ Memo Pipes to Allen, "Weekly Report: Soviet Union and Communist Bloc", February 13, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Weekly Reports, January 1981-1983, Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

²¹² "Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting (excerpt), 4 June 1981," June 04, 1981, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, CWIHP archive.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112867>

²¹³ "Minutes of an Interagency Coordinating Committee for US-Soviet Affairs Meeting", March 17, 1981, Richard Pipes Files, January 1981-1983, Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

²¹⁴ Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment*, p80-81

of reference for crafting policy towards the USSR, with an emphasis being placed on the Soviet internal scene, specifically the “Soviet nationalities problem and dissident movement”²¹⁵. Although the State Department remained more moderate in their general disposition towards the USSR, individuals inside the Policy Planning Staff such as Wolfowitz were more hard-line and eager to see the State Department take the lead on Soviet strategy, earnestly pushing on with the task of crafting a coherent strategy designed to pressurise the Soviet Union in key areas, while liaising with similarly-minded colleagues on the NSC.

In June, Wolfowitz and Eagleburger asked Haig to sign off their finalised ‘East-West Policy Study’, which they had been working on over the previous few months, they were keen to “circulate the full study so that we can move ahead promptly to the SIG (Senior Interdepartmental Group) and the NSC”. They pressed Haig, “having passed the 4-month mark, the Administration now needs to pull together the various strands of its East-West policy into one coherent strategic approach. This is important for sustaining a consistent posture toward East-West relations over the next few years ... The attached study provides the essential elements of a strategy to guide our East-West relations”. Wolfowitz and Eagleburger laid out their vision for what US-Soviet relations would look like in the coming years, painting a dark image of Soviet foreign policy activism and bellicosity which would threaten the US-led international order. “The Soviet-American relationship will be entering a new and dangerous phase during the coming decade, independent of any major US policy changes”, the report declared, “increased Soviet power threatens the free and open international order the US has sought to maintain throughout the post-war period”²¹⁶.

Wolfowitz and the Policy Planning Staff believed America needed a full-spectrum strategy for the new and dangerous period into which the world was entering, telling Haig, “in this setting, our East-West policy will be based on the following premises: (1) that the East-West competition reflects fundamental and enduring conflicts of interests, purpose and outlook; (2) that the US should move beyond its passive post-Vietnam foreign policy and provide greater leadership to enable the West to compete more effectively; (3) that over the near term, given the legacy we have inherited, we often will have to compete with the USSR under unfavourable circumstance; and (4) some degree of cooperation with Moscow is possible and desirable and can help to sustain a consensus both at home and

²¹⁵ Memo McFarlane to Wolfowitz, “Study of East-West Relations”, February 6, 1981, Department of State, Executive Secretariat, January 1981-1983, Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-198

²¹⁶ Memo Wolfowitz, Eagleburger and Burt to Haig, “East-West Policy Study”, June 4, 1981, Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/P Records, Memoranda from the Director of the Policy Planning to the Secretary and Other Principals, January 1981-December 1988; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

abroad in favour of a more competitive posture". It was a stark vision of an enduring conflict of interests, requiring renewed American leadership, yet also accepting that some negotiation with the Soviets would have to be inevitable. Wolfowitz and Eagleburger saw this as a long-term struggle for dominance which necessitated American, "willingness to assume higher risks in defending our interests ... we must make use of our existing assets more efficiently by taking advantage of special areas of American and Western strength, while exploiting Soviet weaknesses and vulnerabilities".

The PPS recognised that the Soviet Union would undoubtedly push back against this assertive American foreign policy approach, and that there must also be a recognition of vital Soviet interests which Moscow would legitimately defend, yet while avoiding "mindless confrontations" the US should "compete forcefully" with the USSR because the costs of accepting Soviet aggression were "simply too high". The document is a snapshot into the mindset of certain section of hawkish policymakers inside the US government as the 1980s began; the international system was a dark and dangerous arena of competing interests which was utterly permeated with Soviet aggression, requiring the United States to exercise leadership and carry the awesome burden of confronting and challenging the USSR in multiple arenas. Wolfowitz and his associates in the PPS believed Reagan's victory in the 1980 election had given them a mandate to implement a more muscular US Cold War strategy, and they believed the tide would turn if only America would embrace its strengths and be ruthless in its exploitation of Soviet weaknesses. They explained to Secretary Haig that despite holding some short-term strengths, the USSR was also facing a series of long-term weaknesses, such as economic stagnation, imperial overextension, and the bankruptcy of their ideology. Nevertheless, the US could not afford to remain passive, it must proactively seek ways to undermine Soviet authority both at home and abroad²¹⁷.

Wolfowitz identified a number of goals which he would like to see the US pursue; restoring a satisfactory military balance, defending Western interests in areas of instability, improving relationships with allies, and developing new alliances in Asia. In terms of directly challenging Soviet authority in its Eastern European sphere of influence, Wolfowitz called for the US to continue its long standing 'differentiation' policy of promoting liberalising trends within the Soviet bloc, encouraging a degree of foreign policy autonomy among the East European client states of the USSR, while also seeking to discourage intervention by

²¹⁷ Memo Wolfowitz, Eagleburger and Burt to Haig, "East-West Policy Study", June 4, 1981, Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/P Records, Memoranda from the Director of the Policy Planning to the Secretary and Other Principals, January 1981-December 1988; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

Moscow²¹⁸. He also identified the promotion of reformist trends, nationalist dissidence, and human rights activism within the USSR itself as crucial areas to exploit, urging the US to recover “the ideological initiative by spotlighting the deficiencies of the Soviet system”²¹⁹.

Of major concern was the USSR’s activity and assertiveness in the Third World, and it was becoming apparent to some US policymakers that encouraging democratic trends in these areas, rather than supporting authoritarian dictatorships, was important for fending off communist insurgencies²²⁰. And promoting democratic forces inside the Soviet Union was now a key interest of the United States, which would hopefully blunt this Soviet activism abroad. The document specifically identified the Soviet nationalities problem as an area which the US should focus on, exploiting the simmering tensions through increased radio broadcasting and propaganda. Quite simply, he believed, “the long-term weaknesses of the Soviet system can be encouraged in part simply by telling the truth about the USSR. The Soviet Union faces nascent problems among its nationalities (particularly in the Baltic states and among Muslim groups in Central Asia). The United States should provide the ICA (International Communication Agency) with increased resources to step up broadcasting activities to the Soviet Union, the satellites and Soviet Third World clients, highlighting the economic and moral failings of Moscow and its allies”²²¹. The CIA had also continued to support the radio broadcasting, covert book smuggling program, and dissident publishing activities developed by Brzezinski and Henze during the Carter presidency, and this would continue to play a key role moving forward²²². Wolfowitz concluded, “the expansionist international behaviour of the Soviet Union and its repressive, stagnant internal system make it vulnerable to a moral counter-attack.

Yet the US must also offer a positive vision of the future. By promoting peaceful democratic change, US policy will be able to give substance to this positive view and prevent the emergence of Soviet opportunities”. The PPS policy paper laid out a clear set of priorities,

²¹⁸ For more on Paul Wolfowitz and his foreign policy views see, Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p196-231

²¹⁹ Memo Wolfowitz, Eagleburger and Burt to Haig, “East-West Policy Study”, June 4, 1981, Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/P Records, Memoranda from the Director of the Policy Planning to the Secretary and Other Principals, January 1981-December 1988; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

²²⁰ Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 2012), p27

²²¹ Memo Wolfowitz, Eagleburger and Burt to Haig, “East-West Policy Study”, June 4, 1981, Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/P Records, Memoranda from the Director of the Policy Planning to the Secretary and Other Principals, January 1981-December 1988; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

²²² Kuzio, “U.S. support for Ukraine’s liberation during the Cold War”, p10

offered a succinct analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of America and its communist foe, and although the bulk of the paper focused on military issues and curtailing Soviet adventurism around the world, it also challenged the United States to take a more proactive approach with regards to exploiting the internal problems of the USSR, specifically its restive ethnic nationalities. The paper was the first US government endeavour of the Reagan years geared towards creating a coherent framework for guiding policy toward the Soviet Union, and it caught the eye of the White House. On June 4, McFarlane sent the memo to Haig declaring, “this is one of the finest pieces of analysis I have ever seen. In my judgment it warrants a careful reading. Further it can form the basis for an early speech by yourself or the President”. Haig replied, “tell the boys to move out. I want a speech ASAP”²²³. While the State Department were content with the paper, there remained some elements within the White House who believed it should have actually gone even further, requiring even more emphasis on the internal nature and weakness of the Soviet state, an issue which would come around again in 1982.

Crafting strategy

By the end of 1981, the White House became more assertive in exploring the themes which would animate Reagan’s foreign policy. The NSC started to produce papers designed around the concept of promoting change within the Soviet Union and articulating policy options with regards to the exploitation of the Soviet Union’s nationality problems. In November, Pipes drafted the first in-depth paper of his time in the administration which he hoped would form the backbone of the administration’s Soviet policy, submitting it to Allen who in turn passed it to President Reagan. Pipes anticipated his observations about the internal problems facing the Soviet Union, notably its growing nationalist sentiments, would guide US statecraft moving forward and he laid out his vision of US-Soviet relations. Key to his thinking was the belief that communism was inherently expansionist, and that its expansionism would only subside when the Soviet system either collapsed or was thoroughly reformed. He believed the Stalinist model on which Soviet communism was based was entering a state of profound crisis, brought about by crippling economic problems and imperial overextension. Furthermore, Pipes speculated as to the future direction of Soviet

²²³ Memo Wolfowitz, Eagleburger and Burt to Haig, “East-West Policy Study”, June 4, 1981, Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/P Records, Memoranda from the Director of the Policy Planning to the Secretary and Other Principals, January 1981-December 1988; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988. Italics in the original document.

leadership once Brezhnev had departed from the scene, with 'reformist' factions perhaps pressing for modest democratisation.

As far as US policy was concerned, Pipes believed "it is in the interest of the United States to promote the reformist tendencies in the USSR by a double-pronged strategy: encouraging pro-reform forces inside the USSR and raising for the Soviet Union the costs of its imperialism". Pipes thought US Soviet policy required something of an overhaul, recommending that the administration train its focus on the problems within the USSR in an attempt to blunt Soviet adventurism, an approach which should now form an important part of American strategic thinking. "For all the dramatic swings which have characterised our policies towards the Soviet Union throughout the last six decades", Pipes told Allen, "they had one feature in common: to moderate the external behaviour of the Soviet regime by external means. This objective was pursued by toughness and punishments, now by gentleness and rewards. What has not been attempted so far is modification of the Soviet government's external behaviour from within by encouragement and/or identification with forces and processes present inside the Soviet state that are inherently anti-expansionist and reform-minded"²²⁴. This was an explicit call for the United States government to undertake policies aimed at altering the very nature of the Soviet Union itself.

Pipes believed the Soviet Union existed in a condition of permanent tension with its own citizenry, something which American foreign policy had neglected for too long, telling Allen that it made sound strategic sense to exert maximum possible internal pressure on the Soviet regime from now on. He felt the policy of containment had served the US well during an earlier period of the Cold War, but its success had been based on overwhelming American military dominance over the USSR, something which was no longer guaranteed in light of the recent Soviet arms build-up. The US should move beyond the policy of containment and devise a new strategy "which exploits not so much our own strengths as our adversary's weaknesses". For Pipes, the Soviet Union's expansionist foreign policy was firmly rooted in the internal condition of its society and political culture, "there exists an intimate relationship between the internal condition of the Soviet Union - its economy and its political system - and its foreign policy. It is not possible to effectively cope with the latter while ignoring the former". Not only did Pipes view communism as an intrinsically expansionist and revolutionary ideology, he felt the domestic problems within the

²²⁴ "Reagan Soviet Policy", November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

communist system were also important influences on Soviet activism abroad²²⁵. Thus, Pipes was making the case for an entirely new approach to American Cold War policy, based not only on material factors and the balance of power, but on regime type and the internal dynamics of adversarial states²²⁶.

American values had long undergirded and influenced the US approach to the world, yet as the bipolarity of the Cold War stalemate became entrenched, policymakers had realised that the USSR would not be swept away so easily. As a result, they began to view the struggle with the Soviet Union in terms of long-term great power politics, with hard power dominating strategic thinking, and the developing world serving as a proxy arena for the superpowers to test each other's resolve without provoking all-out nuclear war²²⁷. Now Pipes was calling for something different; an all-out ideological crusade to assault the very nature of the Soviet Union. Zbigniew Brzezinski had tried to move US foreign policy in this direction in the Carter administration, his beliefs about Soviet internal problems and his intent to "stir" up the nationalities demonstrating the return of the power of ideas to foreign policymaking. Now Pipes, and like-minded strategists in the White House, were eager to push further and explore the internal weaknesses of their communist rival as a central platform of American grand strategy.

The question was, which areas of Soviet society should the American government look to exploit? Pipes saw the USSR as entering a real crisis period of instability due to the intrinsic contradictions of its political system, advanced economic decay, and growing dissent within its borders. He believed there to be two strands of dissent within the Russian lands of the Soviet empire; a liberal and Western-looking branch centred around famous dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov and Yuri Orlov, and a conservative Russian nationalist branch which looked to the arch-traditionalist Alexander Solzhenitsyn for inspiration. Nevertheless, Pipes viewed dissent as pervading the entirety of the Soviet population, silent dissatisfaction at specific grievances for different groups, the most important of which he believed were the industrial workers, peasants, and ethnic minorities. For the purposes of this study, Pipes

²²⁵ For a useful discussion on the importance of regime type in determining foreign policy see, Joe D. Hagan, "Regime Type, Foreign Policy and International Relations", *International Studies*, (January 2018)

²²⁶ "Reagan Soviet Policy", November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

²²⁷ For an excellent study of how religion and American values mixed to shape early Cold War US policies see, William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For an excellent recent work on the role of values and morality in US foreign policy see, Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Do Morals Matter?: Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

identification of the Soviet nationalities as an important fountain of dissent for the Soviets government and an area which was ripe for exploitation by the Americans, is instructive.

Pipes informed Allen that the, “so-called “nationality” question in the Soviet Union derives from the dissatisfaction of the nearly one-half of its non-Russian citizens with a regime which gives them virtually no say in the manner their regions are administered”. The strength of these nationalist sentiments varied from region to region, with many determining factors in the mix, such as population density, education levels, historic traditions, and relations with both Russians and other non-Russian nationalities in the area. “As a rule,” Pipes went on, “the sense of nationalism is strongest among those nationalities which have the least in common with the Russians linguistically and historically and/or possess the largest intelligentsia”²²⁸. Pipes was articulating ideas he had been thinking deeply about for a long time. Back in 1955, Pipes had taken a trip through the Soviet republics of Central Asia and came home with a lasting impression of the failure of Sovietisation to penetrate these avowedly traditional lands. He held onto those impressions, believing the latent power of nationalism, particularly in the Muslim republics of the Soviet periphery, were a ticking time bomb and it was only a matter of time before nationalities grievances became an explosive issue for Moscow to contend with²²⁹.

Richard Pipes now had an opportunity to advance his ideas, and to have a real influence on the shaping of Reagan’s strategy towards the Soviet Union. He felt that the very notion of the USSR as a ‘superpower’ was a lie, fed by Soviet propaganda, and should be repudiated completely by the United States because it led to a false impression of a bipolar world, and thus a false choice between the Soviet version of peace and progress, and an alternative of US-instigated reactionary politics and war. Other than the massive stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weapons it possessed, Pipes felt the Soviet Union was no more than a second-ranked power on a par with the likes of Japan or the nations of Western Europe, and the only true superpower on earth was the United States. He longed to see a US foreign policy based on the American principles of economic and political liberty, limited government, in harmony with the “spirit and values of the American people”. While recognising the difficulties of promoting these values abroad, and counselling that the US had neither the right nor the ability to impose liberal democracy on foreign lands, Pipes stressed the vital importance of domestic support for American statecraft, which would only

²²⁸ “Reagan Soviet Policy”, November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

²²⁹ Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memiors of a Non-Belonger*, p87-90

be possible by implementing policies based on values which were in tune with the US populace.

Pipes saw three main areas of Soviet weakness which this values-laden US foreign policy should look to exploit; economic, political, and ideological. In the economic sphere, he believed that offering concessions to communist regimes simply didn't work, which is why he rejected détente, and only the spread of democracy and free enterprise would really place Moscow's control over its empire at risk. He called for a restriction on the sale of technology to the USSR and wanted to use the West's economic leverage not to prop up communism, but to encourage moves towards market reforms. Pipes turned to the political issue of nationalism, human rights dissidence and ethnic unrest within the Soviet Union, pinpointing them as crucial weak-spots for the Kremlin, which America should exploit further. Pipes had been arguing since the mid 1970s that both the Russification policies of the Kremlin and the sharp Russian demographic decline were accelerating the consolidation of non-Russian national identities and consciousness within the Soviet Union²³⁰. He remained wary of xenophobic Russian nationalism, and worried about a future post-Brezhnev 'conservative' turn which would lead to further expansionism. But he hoped for the triumph of a more benign, Western-orientated Russian nationalism in a future Kremlin leadership contest. Nevertheless, "it should be our objective to encourage the forces of dissent active within the USSR, especially those that strive for greater democracy and human rights", Pipes urged, "we ought to express open support for all overt dissenting groups, save for those of the extreme (nationalist) right".

Pipes believed the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union were of central importance to this strategy, calling on the US to "express strong support for the cause of national self-determination for all ethnic groups under Russian domination". The academic remarked, "our task is not to work for the disintegration of the Soviet Union (any more than it is to ensure its integrity), but we are committed to supporting the principle of national self-determination²³¹". This last line is of note, because by April 1982 Pipes would claim, "the bottom line is that we are helping to encourage the dissolution of the Soviet empire", during an NSC meeting²³². In order to reach these disaffected national minorities within the Soviet Union, Pipes called for an ideological campaign with radio broadcasting at its heart.

²³⁰ Richard Pipes, "Introduction: The Nationality Problem," in *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities*, ed. Zev Katz (Riverside, NY, 1975), p2, 4.

²³¹ "Reagan Soviet Policy", November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

²³² Pipes quoted in Kalinovsky, "Encouraging resistance: Paul Henze, the Bennigsen school, and the crisis of détente," p224

Throughout the Cold War the US had made use of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to reach beyond the Iron Curtain, and these efforts had been ramped up during the Carter years at the directive of Brzezinski. Pipes told Allen, “almost everyone agrees that propaganda, especially through short-wave broadcasts, is of the greatest importance... a good case can be made that in the decade directly ahead propaganda will move to the forefront and become the single most effective instrument in our struggle to contain Soviet expansionism”. Pipes stressed the importance of continuing radio broadcasts into the republics of the USSR as part of the administration’s developing nationalities policy, “in broadcasts beamed to the minority areas we should explicitly affirm their grievances (Russification, unequal distribution of capital investments, maltreatment of minority soldiers in the Red Army etc), and express sympathy for their right to national self-determination”.

Pipes had positioned the Soviet nationalities at the heart of his vision for Reagan’s grand strategy towards the Soviet Union, calling for an ideological and propaganda campaign which would specifically target the grievances of ethnic groups in the Soviet regions. He believed it was absolutely vital for the US government to inform the various ethnic groups within Soviet society about the nature of the communist regime, and in closing his policy proposal to Allen he quoted the Soviet émigré writer Alexander Zinoviev, who said “I have discovered one of the most vulnerable points of this society... and this vulnerable point must be struck, and struck, and struck again”²³³. On sending his report to the president’s national security adviser on November 4, Pipes informed Allen that he had shared the original draft of the paper with fellow anti-communist hardliner Jeanne Kirkpatrick, who had told him she felt it was, “the best analysis of the subject she had ever read”²³⁴. Allen submitted the report to Reagan later that month²³⁵, with the president telling him it was “very sound”²³⁶.

²³³ “Reagan Soviet Policy”, November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

²³⁴ Memo Pipes to Allen, “Reagan Soviet Policy Paper: Condensed Version”, November 4, 1981, November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL. Pipes, keen to ingratiate himself with Reagan, wrote in his memo to Allen, “I hope you do not mind my leaving the author’s name on the cover: as I understand the arrangement we had made a year or so ago, any substantial contributions from me would go to the President under my name”. When Allen passed the report to the Reagan a few weeks later, Pipes name was left off.

²³⁵ Memo Allen to Reagan, “Soviet Policy”, November 20, 1981, November 1981, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²³⁶ William Inboden, “Grand Strategy and Petty Squabbles: The Paradox and Lessons of the Reagan NSC”, in Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, Eds., *The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft*, p164

Clark brings coherence

As 1982 dawned, the eyes of the world remained on Poland. While the threat of Soviet invasion had receded, the imposition of martial law had sent shockwaves through Eastern Europe and the Reagan White House was watching and considering US options in the region. Meanwhile, the ongoing war in Afghanistan continued to dominate the headlines as it slowly turned into a deadly quagmire for the invading Soviet forces. And a year into Reagan's presidency, pressure was mounting on the administration to produce a complete and comprehensive strategy towards the USSR. Despite maintaining a very public hard-line, and ramping up anti-Soviet covert activity around the world, the administration was yet to deliver a strategy document which would act as a guiding light for its policy towards the Soviets. Reagan's rhetoric was continuing to alarm the Soviet leadership, with the Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko confronting Haig about the issue during arms reduction talks in Geneva. Gromyko believed that not a single day passed without some sort of inflammatory statement from Washington towards Moscow, which had "seriously poisoned Soviet-US relations"²³⁷. However, behind these bombastic public utterances, Reagan was already pondering the right time to build a more fruitful dialogue with the Soviets.

Despite his stinging criticism of communism, from his earliest days in office Reagan had been eager to engage with Soviet leaders. Most famously he reached out to Brezhnev while convalescing in hospital following the assassination attempt in early 1981, much to the chagrin of the unsentimental advisers around him²³⁸. There was still a feeling that the time was not right for talks to commence, with Clark advising the president, "the current economic and imperial crisis of the Soviet regime, acute though it is, does not offer good opportunities for negotiations. The Soviet regime has never made political concessions out of economic considerations: it has made political concessions only to meet its political needs". But with Brezhnev's health failing, Clark went on, "the death or removal of a leader unsettles the whole system of administration and requires a breathing spell in foreign relations" and he felt the US should be ready to engage in such a moment²³⁹. Pipes was well-aware of Reagan's growing desire to engage constructively with Moscow, telling Clark his advice to Reagan on the matter, "addresses itself to the question raised by the President

²³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation (hereafter MemCon), "Haig-Gromyko Meeting", January 26, 1982, William Clark Files, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²³⁸ Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, Martin Anderson, *Reagan: A Life in Letters* (New York: Free Press, 2003), p720-721

²³⁹ Memo Clark to Reagan, "When to Negotiate with the Soviet Union", April 5, 1982, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Country File USSR, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

back at the NSC meeting of March 25 and at the DIA briefing on the Soviet economy the following day: 'When is the time to sit down and negotiate with the Soviets?'"²⁴⁰. Nevertheless, for now the focus of the hardliners remained on applying pressure to the USSR and attempting to influence the internal dynamics of the Soviet state, and soon there would be tangible policy documents aimed at guiding those impulses and transmitting them into an overarching strategy.

In January 1982, William P. Clark, Reagan's old friend from California, had replaced Allen as national security adviser. 'Judge' Clark set about bringing some much-needed order and discipline to the NSC, smoothing the process and setting his sights on orchestrating a clearly-defined strategy towards the USSR. A devout Catholic and fiercely committed anti-communist, Clark felt he had a clear understanding of the president's foreign policy vision, benefiting both from their long-standing friendship and the increased access to the Oval Office which came with his new position²⁴¹. Clark was enthusiastic about the tough line his boss was taking with Moscow, and he was eager to surround the president with like-minded advisers. As a result of Clark's promotion Richard Pipes position was also elevated within the White House, he now personally briefed Reagan on Soviet affairs, and had regular access to the president. Clark tasked Pipes with drafting an official presidential directive on national security which would reflect the president's views and offer a foundation to build on moving forward. This was something Pipes had been keen to set in motion for some time, he was growing concerned about the reaction of America's allies to the new tough stance on Moscow, telling Clark that the Europeans were, "demanding to know what the long-term purpose of our hard-line actions toward the Communist Bloc is. Do we intend to provoke a confrontation? Do we want to isolate the Soviet Bloc? Do we have some other purpose in mind? Or are we being merely impulsive?".

Pipes was troubled by the fact that the administration still hadn't articulated a clear Soviet policy yet, something which he felt the Carter administration deserved criticism for never having done, "it seems to me, therefore, quite imperative that a decision be made on what our long-term policy toward the Communist Bloc is (i.e., what we expect to result from our hard-line policies) and then to make the broad outlines of these objectives public. The first and most critical step can be accomplished through an NSDD on the Soviet Union (there is

²⁴⁰ Footnotes in Memo Clark to Reagan, "When to Negotiate with the Soviet Union", April 5, 1982, Executive Secretariat, NSC, Country File USSR, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²⁴¹ Paul Kengor and Patricia Clark Doerner, *The Judge: William P. Clark, Ronald Reagan's Top Hand* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), p144-146

no PD on the subject to revise, strange as it may seem)”²⁴². This was an opportunity for Pipes to cement his ideas in concrete policy terms and to formalize concepts of the Reagan foreign policy vision into coherent guidance, the result of which was NSDD-32, a document outlining US national security policy which Reagan signed in May 1982. The directive declared that US national security policy would deter military attacks by the USSR and its allies, strengthen the influence of the US throughout the world, and contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military presence globally. Notably, it also called for an approach which would foster change within the Soviet Union itself, stating US policy should “encourage long-term liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union and allied countries”²⁴³. The document has been described as a “triumph” for the hardliners in the administration²⁴⁴. Pipes ideas were now embedded in official national security policy.

With NSDD-32 formalising a broad outline for US foreign policy, attention within the administration now turned towards creating a more in-depth strategy towards the Soviet Union. Pipes would again be at the centre of the process, though he had to battle through bureaucratic infighting to do so. The State Department felt there was no need for another official document directing American national security affairs following the approval of the aforementioned “East-West Policy Study”, drafted by Wolfowitz and the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff the previous year. Pipes was not enamoured with this document, feeling it was too long, too focused on military aspects of the US-Soviet relationship, and wasn’t clear in identifying ultimate US objectives in dealing with the Soviet Union. He also sensed brewing conflict between the State Department and the Department of Defence, telling Clark that the NSC alone should have final arbitration over producing future policy²⁴⁵. Pipes continued to have disagreements with the State Department over the next few months as he worked out the contours of his strategy paper. He felt the document produced by the diplomats at Foggy Bottom were “unwieldy” and “did not tackle the problem boldly enough”.

As Brzezinski and Henze had discovered during the Carter presidency, the State Department remained wary of interfering in the internal problems of the Soviet Union. This was not to

²⁴² Memo Pipes to Clark, “Statement on US Strategy Toward Soviet Union”, March 5, 1982, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁴³ NSDD-32, “US National Security Strategy”, National Security Decision Directives, Ronald Reagan Digital Library <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/digital-library/nsdds>

²⁴⁴ Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p31

²⁴⁵ Memo Pipes to Clark, “Terms of Reference on NSSD on Policy Towards the Soviet Union”, March 10, 1982, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

Pipes liking. He wished to see America pursue audacious goals, he wanted to infuse American statecraft with a renewed missionary impulse, to craft an unabashedly ideological foreign policy aimed at transforming the very nature of the Soviet Union itself. “The basic problem between State and myself is philosophical”, he told Clark in June 1982, “State believes that we should be content with an attempt to influence Soviet behaviour by proffering rewards when it is peaceful and punishments when it is not”. To Pipes, this was a holdover from the outdated thinking of the *détente* era. He also believed his ideas and vision to be in tune with Reagan’s beliefs, an impression which was fraught because of Reagan’s often noncommittal and guarded managerial style. But in this instance, Pipes was correct in his instincts when he told Clark, “following what I sense to be the President’s belief, I, by contrast, argue that behaviour is the consequence of the system and that our policies... aim at modifying the system as a prerequisite of changed behaviour”.

Pipes believed the most controversial idea which he hoped to integrate into the policy directive was the “premise that Soviet international behaviour is a response not only to external threats and opportunities but also to the internal imperatives of the Soviet political, economic, social and ideological system”. Pipes expected the State Department to fight this proposition “tooth and nail”, although to him it seemed to “express the quintessence of the President’s approach”²⁴⁶. The administration worked to create an updated strategy document to guide its relations with the Soviet Union, and which would go further than NSDD-32. A particular focus would be on the internal nature of the Soviet regime and developing ways in which American policy could affect the inner dynamics of the USSR, most notably towards the Soviet nationalities. In Pipes’s view, this updated strategy should “analyse the determinants of Soviet foreign policy and domestic policies of concern to the U.S. and other outside powers, assess Soviet strengths and weaknesses, identify key elements of likely continuity and change in the Soviet system and Soviet policies, and determine the political, economic, military and ideological means at our disposal for achieving favourable changes in Soviet international behaviour, including assessment of the costs and obstacles involved in using them”²⁴⁷.

²⁴⁶ Memo Pipes to Clark, “Terms of Reference on NSSD on Policy Towards the Soviet Union”, June 22, 1982, Box 39, US Policy Towards Soviet Union NSSD 5-82, 1/8, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁴⁷ National Security Study Directive 11-82, “US Policy Towards the Soviet Union, August 21, 1982, Executive Secretariat, NSC, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

George Schultz asserts himself

In mid 1982, changes were afoot within the administration. The ever-brusque Haig overstepped the mark one final time and was replaced as secretary of state by George P. Shultz, who would go on to form a close bond with Mikhail Gorbachev and become one of the key figures in ending the Cold War. His appointment would prove to be a transformative point in the trajectory of Reagan's Soviet policies. Shultz has been described as the "critical agent of US foreign policy" during this period, perhaps the most consequential secretary of state in American history²⁴⁸. As Reagan struggled with his conflicting impulses, oscillating between his natural loathing of the Soviet system and his personal desire to build bridges with the Soviet leadership, Shultz nurtured the president's disposition towards engagement and soon earned his trust. He was a moderating influence in an administration stacked with hardliners: open to diplomatic engagement with the Soviets, committed to the cause of human rights within the communist bloc, and fully focused on transforming the confrontational nature of America's current relations with the USSR²⁴⁹. Shultz gained experience of negotiating with the Soviets during the Nixon administration, coming to respect them both as negotiators and as people. Nevertheless, he believed certain conditions had to be met before the relationship would improve, and Shultz was in no doubt as to the nature of the adversary they faced, telling Gromyko in their very first meeting that the deterioration in relations was solely the fault of the Soviet Union²⁵⁰. Shultz was tough, and he was sharp. He was also of the opinion that smart US policies could move the USSR in favourable directions, telling Reagan, "we must not rule out the possibilities that firm US policies could help induce the kind of changes in Soviet behaviour that would make an improvement in relations possible"²⁵¹.

Shultz believed the only way to make progress with the Soviets was to offer them a degree of legitimacy, he was not personally dispositioned to the tough talk of the early Reagan years, and he appreciated the important role that trust plays in any negotiation. Most importantly, Shultz thought the Soviet Union actually had the capacity to reform itself into a less menacing regime, this cause was not hopeless, and there was no need for the US to tear the USSR down to achieve its goals. This stood Shultz in stark contrast to the hardliners

²⁴⁸ Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p5

²⁴⁹ For background information on Shultz and his selection as secretary of state see, Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, 1st ed (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2000), 59-61. For Shultz's reflections on his time at the peak of American diplomacy see his memoir, George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scirbner's, 1993).

²⁵⁰ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, p122-123

²⁵¹ Shultz, quoted in Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment*, p85

within the administration such as Clark and Pipes, not to mention Bill Casey at the CIA, and the likes of Kirkpatrick and Wolfowitz. As Shultz began to exert influence on Reagan and his policies, the hardliners continued to press ahead with their own broad agenda. Now entering the final 6 months of his government service before he had to return to academia, Pipes remained eager to push a policy program which would target the internal weaknesses of the Soviet Union, such as human rights dissidence and the growing resentment of the nationalities. At stake was the question of America's final objective vis a vis the Soviet Union. The debate inside the administration regarding the ultimate goal of America's Soviet policies continued to rumble over the summer of 1982, and it was a debate of direct implications for the administration's Soviet nationalities policy.

In August 1982, Shultz brought together a group of outside Soviet experts and representatives from the competing schools of thought within the administration to discuss the future course of Reagan's strategy towards the USSR. Ahead of the meeting, Wolfowitz set an agenda which would revolve around four broad areas of discussion; Soviet assets and vulnerabilities, current Soviet policy, US leverage and priorities, and building public support for their approach. Within each area he suggested deeper topics of discussion, covering areas such as; the Soviet Union's methods for handling their economic problems while also managing the burden of carrying the Eastern bloc, an exploration of current Soviet foreign policy objectives, the Soviet view of the Reagan administration, US leverage and priorities in its relations with the USSR, human rights policy, and methods for easing the fears of nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union which were now rising among the US people.

A week before the seminar, Wolfowitz shared with Shultz some of his concerns about the competing influences on Soviet policy within the administration, "our strengths lie in the enduring power of the human rights issue, in our openness to negotiation, and our diplomatic activism in resolving conflicts" he said. Yet in trying to convey "consistency, firmness, and balance", he felt the US faced a dilemma. "Harsh and ideological rhetoric, particularly when directed at the Soviet system rather than at Soviet behaviour, may seem likely only to increase tensions... emphasizing the need to overturn Communism may in fact set a standard by which we will be seen to fail". Wolfowitz wrestled with the role of ideology in American foreign policy, keen to chart a prudent course yet believing the "failure to emphasize our ideological differences... may signal business-as-usual and make it harder to defend costly

policies”²⁵². It was the classic challenge facing all American foreign policy practitioners; the eternal debate over the appropriate role of values and interests.

When the group convened a week later, their number included former Secretaries of Defence Don Rumsfeld and Harold Brown, the neoconservative intellectual and anti-communist ideologue Norman Podhoretz, former Nixon and Ford Soviet experts Brent Scowcroft and Hal Sonnenfeldt, with those attending from inside the administration including Shultz, Weinberger, Wolfowitz and Clark. The discussion immediately settled around the issue of whether the US should promote change within the Soviet Union through support for internal reformist and nationalist movements or continue to take a more hard-headed approach focused on external threats and containment. Clark posed the question, “what should our goals be - to concentrate on changing the internal structure and objectives of the Soviet system or, to concern ourselves pragmatically with the external manifestations of the Soviet policy which threaten Western interests”. The former position was characterised as “Dick Pipes approach” while the latter as “State’s approach”. Clark went on, “in short, should we be motivated by ideological concerns and try to change the Soviet Union, or should we accept it as a fact of life subject to only evolutionary change and concern ourselves with its containment?”²⁵³. After six hours of rich discussion the meeting ended with a desire to explore the matter further. The debate would continue.

While these issues remained unresolved and the source of profound discussion within the US government, Pipes pushed ahead with his mission to influence and transform Soviet internal dynamics. The clock was ticking on his time in the administration, with Harvard expecting him back at the end of 1982. He didn’t have long left to influence policy from his position inside the White House, and with the arrival of Shultz the hardliners in the administration had a moderating voice in the president’s ear with which they now needed to compete. He had identified the Soviet nationalities problem as an issue he wished to see American foreign policy increase its focus on. After grabbing Reagan’s attention since the beginning of 1982, Pipes now aimed to build on his earlier work on the Soviet nationalities question and thought about how best to direct US policy in ways which could exploit these age-old tensions, promote change within the Soviet Union, and best serve America’s Cold War interest. Pipes remained an important voice within the administration for policies geared towards

²⁵² Memo Wolfowitz to Shultz, “Upcoming East-West Strategy Seminar”, August 16, 1982, Shultz Papers, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²⁵² Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p5

²⁵³ Memo McFarlane to Clark, “Meeting with Outside Experts on East - West Relations”, August 21, 1982, McFarlane Files, Shultz Papers, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

encouraging internal change within the Soviet Union, and in order to expand on these themes the Nationalities Working Group of the Carter era was resurrected in late 1982 and given renewed impetus.

The return of the Nationalities Working Group

Along with Pipes, certain individuals at the State Department and other government agencies were also keen to see the US take a more proactive approach toward the nationalities of the Soviet Union. During the Carter years, Paul Henze had pressed hard for the creation of such a forum, and the Reagan era NWG would now serve a very similar function to the original group which had been founded in 1978. As Henze had believed, while not quite managing to make Soviet ethnic tensions a focal point of US strategy, his efforts had definitely sparked an interest in the Soviet nationalities within the upper echelons of the US government, with the reformed group attracting officials from across the US foreign policymaking world. Another key figure in the revival of the NWG was Mark Palmer, a career foreign service officer who would go onto become ambassador to Hungary in 1986. Palmer also held a deep interest in the Soviet nationalities question and gathered like-minded individuals to meet on a regular basis in order to probe the issue further, with as many as 45-50 officials attending group meetings. As Palmer describes, “the purpose of the working group was to really try to get into detail about the nationalities issues and to develop policy relating to the Soviet Union. I thought it was the core issue there and that we needed as a nation to understand what the hell was going on among the nationalities and to develop policies. It involved things like budgets for RFE and RL. Budgets for VOA. There were practical issues. Language training in the less usual languages. Opening posts in Ukraine and elsewhere”. Palmer believed there was a group of specialists across various agencies of the US government who viewed the Soviet Union as an empire, and an empire which could very well become “unglued”. However, despite Haig, and later Shultz, being supportive of the group, there were elements within the White House who were nervous about the return of the NWG and less than enthralled at the group’s activities; even within a hard-line administration the enterprise was viewed with suspicion²⁵⁴.

The first meeting of the Reagan era NWG was in October 1982 at the State Department, with representatives from the CIA, Department of Defence, State Department and the United States Information Agency (USIA) present, all individuals who were interested in the

²⁵⁴ Ambassador Mark Palmer, Oral History Transcript, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, October 30, 1997

issue of the Soviet nationalities. Pipes, Paula Dobriansky, Walter Raymond and Carey Lord represented the NSC²⁵⁵. Ahead of the group's October 29 meeting, a draft Soviet Nationalities policy paper was circulated among the attendees by Executive Secretary of the Department of State L Paul Bremer, which set out an expansive set of discussion points with the goal of establishing an agenda for the newly revived NWG to work towards²⁵⁶. The Soviet Nationalities paper would form the bedrock of the Reagan NWG's early activities, offering a revealing insight into the administration's strategic thinking and goals with regards to the Soviet nationalities, and how this would feed into the overall US strategy toward the Soviet Union. This was not an ideology-heavy document, but a clear-eyed and hard-headed assessment of the nature of the Soviet nationalities problem which asked whether it would even be to America's benefit to exploit these problems.

The paper began by identifying the problem facing US policymakers who were interested in this issue, and categorising four basic questions to consider while defining US policy towards the Soviet nationalities. The strategy paper felt it pertinent to ask, "what is the nature of the current nationalities problems within the Soviet Union, do they pose a threat to Soviet power, and on what timescale? Should the United States attempt to influence the development of ethnic and nationality problems within the Soviet Union? Assuming the answer is affirmative, should our influence be directed at long-term evolutionary change, at short-term troublemaking, or at both together? And what tools does the United States have at its disposal to achieve its policy objectives, and what should it be doing with them?". These questions largely formed the outline of US government thinking on the Soviet nationalities²⁵⁷.

It was noted that during the prior work of the Nationalities Working Group between 1978 and 1980, when Brzezinski and Henze were beginning to explore the exploitation of internal Soviet problems to serve US interests, these four questions had been addressed by the Carter administration. While there had never been a formal policy document produced on this matter by the Carter White House, there was broad agreement across the agencies that the Soviet nationalities were a matter of interest, but that the scope for influence was limited. The previous NWG ascertained that the Soviet nationalities issue was potentially a

²⁵⁵ Memo Bremer to Stanford and Wheeler, "Soviet Nationalities Policy Paper", October 27, 1982, United States US Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

²⁵⁶ L Paul Bremer III was a career Foreign Service officer who would eventually go on Provisional Coalition Administrator of Iraq following the US invasion in 2003.

²⁵⁷ "Soviet Nationalities Policy Paper", October 27, 1982, United States Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

significant problem for the Soviet leadership it did not currently pose a direct threat to their power, but the US government should closely monitor the development of the Soviet nationalities problem and look for opportunities to influence them in a way that might be beneficial to US interests. Although it was noted that it was important that no actions should be taken that may be construed by the Kremlin as direct attempt to weaken their hold over non-Russian minority areas. There was also the belief that the United States desperately needed to expand its cadre of private and government experts on the Soviet nationalities in order to understand the issue better.

The proposed policy paper of the new Nationalities Working Group stated, “with the advent of the Reagan administration, and the continuing deterioration in US-Soviet relations, it is fair to ask whether the general assumptions made on nationalities matters by the prior Nationalities Working Group still hold their validity, or whether they have been outpaced by changes in the US-Soviet relationship”. The new NWG believed that while the nationalist activities in Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania and Estonia were a cause for concern for Moscow, there was no immediate prospect of these issues spiralling out of control owing to the Kremlin’s adept awareness of this dimension of internal dissent and their determination to keep it under control. Nevertheless, there were “important nationalities problems which could present a growing force for decentralisation and could preoccupy the Soviet authorities in the not too-distant future”.

The issues of military manpower and labour shortages could become more acute, and like the Carter administration, the Reagan NWG also identified Central Asia as a brewing hotspot. The large proportion of Muslim troops within the ethnic makeup of the Soviet armed forces, and the explosive growth of the Soviet Muslim population in the Central Asian republics combined with the drop in the percentage of the Russian nationalities, could pose real difficulties for the Soviets in the future. The NWG report stated that these problems would only grow worse for Moscow over the coming decades, although acknowledged that the central authorities had significant power to deal with these emerging problems. Nevertheless, the policy paper stated, “therefore nationalities problems, while they will almost certainly not threaten a fatal weakening of the Soviet system, will turn into an even more obvious vulnerability of the Soviet system, and one which might be useful to us”²⁵⁸. The ethnic composition of the Soviet army became an issue of interest to US policymakers particularly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, propelled by the defection of

²⁵⁸ “Soviet Nationalities Policy Paper”, October 27, 1982, United States Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

large numbers of Central Asian Soviet troops, an issue which Taras Kuzio believed, “galvanized nationality problems in the Soviet armed forces and more broadly in the non-Russian republics”²⁵⁹.

The NWG policy paper then turned its focus on the US strategy, and whether America should look to influence the development of nationality problems inside the Soviet Union to its advantage. While recognising that the disintegration of the Soviet empire would be in the US interest, the USSR was not currently on the verge of collapse through internal causes and could not be brought to that point by outside intervention. Regardless, the paper described the Soviet policy on their nationalities issue as “beset with contradictions” and “at a minimum, US policy should not help shield the Soviet leadership from the costs of these contradictions. Carefully handled, they could be used to advance US interests, since a Soviet leadership which is not fundamentally sure of the loyalty of its national minorities... is not likely to be as effective a competitor for influence in other parts of the world”. The NWG linked the strong support of the Reagan administration for the Helsinki Accords with their emerging nationalities policy. Thus, actions aimed at supporting the Helsinki goal of increasing the rights and freedoms of all groups within the Soviet Union, including the majority Russians themselves, were a perfectly legitimate objective of US foreign policy, while also serving Washington’s interests by “sharpening the contradictions” inherent in the Soviet Union’s policies towards its national minority groups. It was also in the interest of the United States to “engender within the Soviet leadership some uncertainty about the ultimate loyalty of the regime’s national minorities, a factor which could inhibit Soviet foreign policy behaviour if played correctly”.

Policymakers within the Reagan administration viewed the Soviet nationalities issue as a foreign policy question because internal nationalist upheaval could act as a dangerous distraction for the Kremlin and have a direct bearing on the Soviet Union’s ability to conduct an activist foreign policy in places the US deemed important to its national interest. The report was careful to stress that any US actions in this area must be thoroughly calculated and based on accurate intelligence. These actions must also be tied to Soviet constitutional guarantees and international agreements which the Soviet Union itself was a signatory to, utilising the Soviet’s own rhetoric to encourage pluralism and democracy within the USSR. Prudence was key, “we do not seek, as a matter of declaratory policy, explicitly the break-

²⁵⁹ Taras Kuzio, “Opposition in the USSR to the occupation of Afghanistan”. *Central Asian Survey* 6 (1), 1987, 99-118.

up of the Soviet Union”, the report advised²⁶⁰. The NWG believed that progress had been made with regards to increasing US government knowledge and understanding of the Soviet nationalities issue, but “one of the primary objectives of the Nationalities Working Group should be to continue to seek methods to build up these capabilities”. The increased modernization and funding of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty was of the utmost importance to these endeavours, as it had been when Paul Henze was fighting the budgetary battles of the late 1970s. Radio broadcasts to the national minorities were seen as a way of countering the Kremlin’s narrative about the outside world and the nature of its rule in the USSR.

The NWG also believed a fundamental way to improve knowledge of the non-Russian minorities was increased contacts with Soviet citizens through official and unofficial exchanges, and the establishment of additional US Missions across the USSR. The NWG wanted to explore the question of whether US interests were best served by maintaining an Embassy and a Consulate General inside the USSR or by carefully planned expansion of American presence into other Soviet republics. There was also a need to increase religious contacts and influence, as religion was identified as a vital dimension to many of the national identities. The report called for more to be done in order to enhance Western awareness of the Soviet nationalities and the difficulties they faced living under Moscow rule, and so it was vital to host conferences and seminars with this goal in mind. It also called for the US to work alongside groups such as Amnesty International, the CSCE and the American Psychiatric Association to ensure adequate attention was being paid to the plight of human rights activists who were being persecuted for trying to assert their national traditions. The NWG was wary of lending support to unsavoury nationalist elements however, believing care should be taken “to avoid persons or support for persons who’s activities can only be construed as nationalist or separatist in character, and not human rights related”²⁶¹.

This report set out a broad approach for the development of US policies towards the non-Russian minorities of the Soviet Union. It was the first clear attempt from within the Reagan administration to craft a clear set of priorities and policies towards both enhancing US government understanding of the nationalist issues inside the USSR and considering ways in

²⁶⁰ “Soviet Nationalities Policy Paper”, October 27, 1982, United States Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

²⁶¹ “Soviet Nationalities Policy Paper”, October 27, 1982, United States Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

which US foreign policy may be able to influence these issues in the service of American interests. The policy paper did not call for a bold and idealistic crusade to free the captive nationalities of the USSR and topple the Soviet empire, it was a document which recognised the nationalities were a pressure point for the Soviet government, but they were not in danger of being overrun by nationalist fervour. Furthermore, the NWG prudently accepted that the US possessed only limited leverage and ability to influence events inside the Soviet Union and to affect any changes from which it could benefit. Nevertheless, within those parameters, there were clearly areas of interest to US policymakers and potential for further exploration, with the hope that a coherent nationalities policy could be integrated into broader US strategy towards the Soviet Union and may contribute to moving Soviet society in directions which were beneficial to American Cold War objectives. The report called for attention to be paid to these important issues, and concluded, “it is clear that more can be done”²⁶².

In November 1982, the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev died of a heart attack, and the White House anxiously watched on while a successor was named. When the former KGB boss and long-term Party operator Yuri Andropov was installed as General Secretary two days later, the Reagan administration pondered the implications for the US-Soviet relationship. Clark briefed Reagan on the new Soviet leader, drawing from a CIA report which had been prepared by Bob Gates. The CIA believed Andropov would be a formidable antagonist, with Clark informing Reagan that “the precedent of an extended period for a new Soviet leader to consolidate power does not apply. Andropov is a “leader who has come to power with firm support in the Politburo at the outset, and who has a mandate to act in both domestic and foreign affairs”. He is supported by the military, the security apparatus and powerful conservative elements of the Party”. Furthermore, “given Andropov’s promotion and apparently unchallenged accession to power, he will move promptly to address and tackle domestic and foreign issues/problems, displaying initiative and resolve where necessary”.

Pipes departs

Based on US intelligence reporting of Andropov, the Reagan administration was bracing itself for a formidable struggle with an experienced and wily Soviet operator. Clark informed Reagan that the CIA’s conclusion was, “the Soviet Union is likely to pose an even greater

²⁶² “Soviet Nationalities Policy Paper”, October 27, 1982, United States Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

threat to U.S. security as we are faced with a more active, intelligent, adroit adversary”²⁶³. Yet the path forward for the USSR was unclear. Despite its apparent strength, the CIA reported that the Soviet Union was facing “a wide array of social malaise, ethnic tensions, consumer frustrations, and political dissent. Precisely how these internal problems will ultimately challenge and affect the regime, however, is open to debate and considerable uncertainty”. At that time “ethnic discontent - rooted in cultural, demographic, and economic problems as well as political suppression - remains primarily a latent but potentially serious vulnerability”²⁶⁴. The Reagan administration would continue to assess Andropov over the next few months, while also monitoring the internal Soviet dynamics which may influence his foreign policy decision-making.

In a report which analysed what actions the US should expect from the Soviets in the coming 6-24 months, the State Department attempted to assess Soviet objectives under Andropov stating, “nothing in Andropov’s background or character suggests that he would be predisposed to swing widely from Brezhnev’s course... this by no means implies passive continuity in foreign policy”. The report went on “the Soviet leaders may see more sophisticated, innovative, agile, and diversified diplomacy as the best and cheapest way to undercut and pressure us, expand their influence, relieve internal pressures, and perhaps cut the political costs of some of their more exposed positions abroad... the new Soviet leadership, like the old, sees in Washington an Administration that refuses to respect Soviet status ... they see us as having raised the costs and risks of military and international competition ... they doubt our willingness to respond positively to anything less than a broad Soviet retreat, which they will not contemplate”²⁶⁵.

Meanwhile Reagan was also struggling. The US economy remained sluggish, his approval rating had dipped dramatically, polling showed most Americans were fearful that his explosive rhetoric could provoke nuclear war with the Soviets, the House of Representatives had voted against his scheme for new MX missiles, and the USSR appeared to be regrouping under a new and more formidable leader²⁶⁶. Clark and Reagan again discussed whether now might be the time to engage the Soviets in a serious effort to make progress in arms reduction talks and to put the relationship on a “more stable footing”. Clark wondered if

²⁶³ Clark to Reagan, “Andropov: His Power and Program”, December 28, 1982, Jack Matlock Files, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²⁶⁴ “Soviet Society in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects”, Directorate of Intelligence, December 1982, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

²⁶⁵ Memo Bremer to Clark, “US/Soviet Relations”, US Department of State, December 20, 1982, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

²⁶⁶ Cannon, President Reagan, p196

the Soviet economic difficulties and “looming problems with their ethnically diverse nationalities” might make them more open to negotiating²⁶⁷. Nonetheless, the hardliners within the administration remained dubious of any outreach to the Soviets, wary of anything which could be construed as a softening in the US approach.

With the Nationalities Working Group revived and working on a new course of American action toward the Soviet nationalities, Pipes began to wind down his time in the Reagan administration. Before he left there was time for one more tussle with the State Department over the future direction of US Soviet policy. In December 1982, the State Department had conducted a review of US-Soviet relations and produced a study outlining how Foggy Bottom envisioned the contours of the Soviet relationship over the next two years. The administration was currently working out the details of another presidential directive which would build on the previously issued NSDD-32, and it hoped to conclude and produce the document in early 1983. The State Department study identified the sources of the Soviet challenge to US interests as rooted in both Russian history and its imperial tradition, and the nature of the Communist regime. It identified the USSR’s concerns over its internal insecurity, its superpower ambitions, and its ideologically-mandated animosity toward the United States as the drivers of Soviet foreign policy.

With Soviet aggressiveness stemming from the nature of the internal Soviet system, and concerns over human rights abuses in the USSR, the report acknowledged that US foreign policy should “take into account the nature of the Soviet system in formulation of policy toward the USSR”. While accepting that the United States should develop long-term policies designed to encourage the gradual democratisation of the USSR, the State Department cautioned, “the U.S. almost certainly lacks the capability to bring about major beneficial changes in the Soviet internal order over the near to middle term. Indeed, there is a real possibility that increased external pressure on the Soviet Union could, at least in the short run, give the ruling Communist elite greater incentive for internal repression and external aggressiveness”²⁶⁸.

²⁶⁷ Memo Clark to Reagan, “Engaging the Soviets in a Serious Effort to Make Progress - Is Now the Time?”, December 4, 1982, Executive Secretariat NSC, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²⁶⁸ “US Relations with the USSR”, Study Prepared by an Ad-Hoc Interagency Group on US-Soviet Relations, December 6, 1982, National Security Council, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

Pipes was incensed at the findings of this report, telling Clark, “I find the paper utterly disappointing in almost every respect and quite useless for purposes of policy guidance”. He went on, “the State Department assumes—contrary to all evidence—that the primary concern of the current Soviet administration lies in the area of foreign policy whereas all the evidence indicates that its uppermost concerns are internal”. Pipes believed the State Department were massively underestimating the threat posed by the Soviet Union under the new leadership of Andropov, he felt the report repeated tired talking points from an earlier period of the Cold War, when containment and military force were all that was required to quell Soviet adventurism. The conflict was now ideological, and Pipes wanted to take the war directly to the Soviets, attacking the very nature of their system. Instead Pipes was enraged by what he read, “there is no sense here of a Soviet global strategy and therefore no recommendation of a global U.S. response”, he told Clark, “in particular, there is no mention here of the need to apply internal pressure on the Soviet Union and its Empire through economic, political, and ideological instrumentalities which constitutes one of the three principal U.S. policy objectives”²⁶⁹.

The matter was discussed during an NSC meeting the following day, chaired by the president, where the participants opined upon the new presidential decision directive on Soviet policy which was being prepared. Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam remarked that, “all agree, he said, that U.S. policy should contribute to containing (and over time reversing) Soviet expansionism, should promote internal change in the Soviet system, and should involve negotiation where U.S. interest would be served by such an approach”, yet “there was disagreement on several issues”. Much of the disagreement centred on whether the US should offer the USSR technical and agricultural assistance, with the hardliners pushing for the administration to refrain from assisting the Soviets in developing their natural resources in order to heighten the difficulties facing Moscow internally. Reagan revealed he had already crossed out contentious lines on this subject in a draft of the new directive which he had recently reviewed. He felt the lines were provocative, and Reagan was worried they would leak to the Soviets. The provocative lines had actually been written by Pipes. As his time on the NSC drew to a close, the tide was turning beginning to turn away from the hard-line policies he advocated²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁹ Memo Pipes to Clark, “State’s Paper on US-Soviet Relations”, December 15, 1982, Jack Matlock Files, National Security Council, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²⁷⁰ Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, “US Relations with the USSR”, December 16, 1982, Executive Secretariat NSC, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

Pipes left the administration at the end of 1982 and returned to Harvard, where he continued to write articles pushing for a tougher stance on the Soviets, drawing attention to the brewing nationalities problems facing the Soviet government. His two-year stint in the White House had been eventful, he had worked tirelessly to shape US policy towards the Soviet Union in ways he felt were more attuned to the realities of communism and the nature of the internal problems facing the USSR. In particular, Pipes was adamant that any successful Soviet policy must consider the Soviet nationalities and the difficulties they posed for the Kremlin, he felt this was a vital weakness which the US should exploit in order to promote decentralisation and pluralism within the Soviet Union, serving American strategic interests. Along with others, Pipes oversaw the revival of the Nationalities Working Group, the forum created by members of the Carter administration which provided a platform for research and discussion on the Soviet nationalities and attempted to draft US policies in this area. The hard-line ideas of Brzezinski and Henze were reanimated within the Reagan administration by Pipes, who shared their craving for US foreign policy to directly attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet system and viewed the agitation of the Soviet nationalities as the ideal way to achieve this.

Nevertheless, Pipes remained a curious figure, and his zealous anti-communism and near obsession with exploiting the internal weaknesses of the Soviet Union placed him at the extreme end of hawkish policy positions, even in a White House full of hardliners. As James Wilson says, “Pipes stood out when his lack of political experience led him to make statements exemplifying what others around him probably thought but refrained from stating because they were politically toxic.²⁷¹” After his departure, Pipes’ ideas were taken forward within the administration by John Lenczowski, who was equally as hard-line in his stance towards the Soviet Union, and his belief that the internal composition of the USSR was something American foreign policy should be paying more attention to. Earmarked by Clark as “a prospective replacement for Dr Pipes”, Lenczowski was something of a protégé to his former boss on the NSC, both highly-educated men who were deeply interested in the Soviet nationalities and determined to wage ideological war on the Soviet Union. Lenczowski would become a key figure in the Nationalities Working Group over the next couple of years, urging the administration to focus more attention and resources on Soviet republics such as Ukraine.

²⁷¹ Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p22

NSDD-75 and Shultz's competing four-part framework

In January 1983, Lenczowski drafted an uncompromising memo to Reagan, which Clark passed to the president. The young NSC staffer called on Reagan to continue his ideological campaign against the Soviet regime, for “the Soviet system depends for its survival on the systematic suppression of the truth. This is done by imposing the ideological Party line to justify totalitarian rule and serve the internal security system by setting the standard against which deviationism is measured ... As the Soviets see it, to tell the truth about the USSR is to risk igniting their internal security threat – the threat of mass popular resistance to the ideology”. Lenczowski believed Reagan had hit a major Soviet weak spot, forcing the Kremlin to take him seriously, telling the president, “you showed the Soviets that we have the moral strength and political support to say that the emperor has no clothes and to withstand the protests of the Soviets and the “courtiers” in the media and elsewhere. Thus, by simply telling the truth, you incalculably strengthened the credibility of our military deterrent”²⁷². The general thinking within the administration expected Andropov to alter little in Soviet activities abroad, as Clark articulated in National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting on 10 January 1983, we expect “basically an unchanged centre-line of Soviet policy that falls between broad expansionism and broad retreat. For now, we should stick to the line that US-Soviet relations will improve if, but only if, the Soviets behave more responsibly”²⁷³. In fact, 1983 would see tensions between the US and the Soviet Union rise to some of the highest levels of the entire Cold War.

Despite no longer being part of the White House staff, Richard Pipes' greatest victory was yet to arrive. On January 17, 1983, Reagan signed off on NSDD-75, the presidential directive which finally provided an all-encompassing framework for the administration's Soviet policy, and one of the most important US government documents of the Cold War. The directive stated; “U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union will consist of three elements: external resistance to Soviet imperialism; internal pressure on the USSR to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism; and negotiations to eliminate, on the basis of strict reciprocity, outstanding disagreements”. The three elements which would guide US policy towards the Soviet Union were as follows;

²⁷² Memo Clark to Regan (drafted by Lenczowski), “The Truth and The Strength of America's Deterrent”, January 5, 1983, Clark Files, US-Soviet Relations Papers Working File, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

²⁷³ Memo Clark to Reagan, “NSPG Meeting”, January 10, 1983, National Security Council, January 1981-January 1983; Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988.

1. To contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union in all international arenas – particularly in the overall military balance and in geographical regions of priority concern to the United States. This will remain the primary focus of U.S. policy toward the USSR.

2. To promote, within the narrow limits available to us, the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system in which the power of the privileged ruling elite is gradually reduced. The U.S. recognizes that Soviet aggressiveness has deep roots in the internal system, and that relations with the USSR should therefore take into account whether or not they help to strengthen this system and its capacity to engage in aggression.

3. To engage the Soviet Union in negotiations to attempt to reach agreements which protect and enhance U.S. interests and which are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest. This is important when the Soviet Union is in the midst of a process of political succession.

The document stated that the US would make it clear to the Kremlin that unacceptable behaviour would incur costs, while a more restrained Soviet approach would lead to a fruitful relationship with the West, from which benefits would potentially flow. NSDD-75 called for US foreign policy to “focus on shaping the environment in which Soviet decisions are made both in a wide variety of functional and geopolitical arenas and in the U.S.-Soviet bilateral relationship”. The document highlighted the need for sound military strategy and economic policy, but also called for political action which would expose the weaknesses and contradictions in the Soviet system. “U.S. policy must have an ideological thrust which clearly affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, a free press, free trade unions, free enterprise, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet Communism”.

The new strategy also called for the strengthening of US instruments of political action such as democracy promotion, increased efforts to highlight human rights abuses, and a renewed focus on radio broadcasting into the USSR. This would expose the double standards employed by the Soviet Union in its dealings with its internal problems, with Soviet policies toward its ethnic minorities specifically mentioned. The US wanted to expand its knowledge of Soviet society through increased “cultural, educational, scientific and other cooperative

exchanges” which should be “seen in light of the U.S. intention to maintain a strong ideological component in relations with Moscow”²⁷⁴.

With the adoption of NSDD 75, official US dialogue with their Soviet counterparts would no longer focus merely on geopolitical matters and arms control. The US now viewed internal developments within the USSR as a key component of its negotiation strategy, stating “the U.S. should insist that Moscow address the full range of U.S. concerns about Soviet internal behaviour and human rights violations, and should continue to resist Soviet efforts to return to a U.S.-Soviet agenda focused primarily on arms control”²⁷⁵. From now on, issues surrounding the plight of human rights activists, national minorities, and political dissidents would all become part of the US-Soviet relationship. NSDD 75 was a profound document, and it would have a real impact on encouraging the development of further US policies toward the Soviet nationalities. NSDD-75 enshrined the policy prescriptions of the White House hardliners in official US government policy. The document recognised the political and ideological foundations of the Cold War struggle and was notable for its attention to the internal dynamics of the Soviet Union, tying these directly to negotiations between the superpowers. For those interested in the Soviet nationalities, this presidential directive was a real boon. However, even as this utterly uncompromising document was being issued, there were already stirrings from behind the scenes which revealed Reagan was moving in a different direction, and this victory for hard-line thinking within the administration may be short-lived.

Not only was the NSDD-75 a milestone in US policy towards the Soviet Union, it also sparked an intense period of in-fighting within the administration. In January, Clark had offered his resignation to Reagan. The president’s old friend, who had proven himself as a capable national security adviser, was worn out by the constant White House intrigue and relentless turf wars. Reagan refused to accept his resignation but allowed Clark to return home to California for a month to rest²⁷⁶. It was at this point George Shultz approached the president with an alternative set of policy prescriptions, sending a memo to Reagan outlining his own thinking on how to move the US-Soviet relationship forward, one which was shorn of the hard-line rhetoric of NSDD-75 and differed substantially from the document Reagan had just signed off on. While recognising “the US-Soviet competition has deep roots in the fundamentally different nature of the two societies and in Moscow readiness to use its

²⁷⁴ “NSDD 75”, National Security Decision Directives, RRD/L

²⁷⁵ “NSDD 75”, National Security Decision Directives, RRD/L

²⁷⁶ Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p69

growing military power in ways that threaten our security”, in stark contrast to NSDD-75, Shultz’s proposal called for negotiation and engagement with the Soviet leadership. Shultz conceded there had been increased Soviet activism since Andropov assumed power, yet proposed, “this memo sets forth a strategy for countering this new Soviet activism by using an intensified dialogue with Moscow to test whether an improvement in the US-Soviet relationship is possible”. Shultz went on, “as we proceed, we must keep in mind that our challenge is not to launch a bold, new initiative but to build on the good beginning we have made in the patient, steady, yet creative management of a long-term adversarial relationship with the Soviet Union”.

The secretary of state believed that following a policy of intensified dialogue with the Soviets would best serve US interests and suggested following a framework based around matters of mutual concern such as arms control, economic, and regional issues, while continuing to press the Soviets on human rights abuses. Shultz concluded by telling Reagan, “1983 will be a year of new challenges and opportunities in our relations with the Soviet Union. We have in place a sound policy, which gives us the foundation for an intensified dialogue with Moscow ... Such a dialogue would protect our security interests while giving the Soviets incentives to address our concerns”²⁷⁷. This was not a call to promote sweeping internal change within the Soviet system, but for the US to pursue a strategy based on realism, engagement and mutual interests, while still allowing for Western values and a commitment to human rights to form a key part of the approach. Needless to say, Clark was apoplectic when he found out and held heated meetings with both Reagan and Shultz on his return from California. The internal debate would rumble on for months²⁷⁸.

Unperturbed, Shultz appealed again to the presidents budding desire to engage with the Soviets, arranging a secretive meeting between Reagan and the Soviet ambassador to the US, Anatoly Dobrynin. This would be Reagan’s first meeting with a high-ranking Soviet official, and in the outgoing and cosmopolitan Dobrynin he found the perfect partner. The two men discussed exit visas for the family of Pentecostals who were sheltered in the basement of the US embassy in Moscow, with Reagan promising not to grandstand if the Soviets would quietly allow them to leave the USSR. A promise which was kept on both sides, building trust. After the meeting, Reagan wrote in his diary, “George tells me that

²⁷⁷ Memo Shultz to Reagan, “US-Soviet Relations in 1983, January 19, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁷⁸ Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p69-70

after they left the Ambassador said ‘this could be a historic moment’”²⁷⁹. In March, Shultz sent the president a follow-up briefing to his January memo entitled, “USG-Soviet Relations - Where do we want to be and how do we get there?”. Once again Shultz described a path forward for US-Soviet relations which focused on negotiation and shared interests, striking a tone very different to the confrontational nature of NSDD-75. He advocated the continual improvement of America’s economic, diplomatic and military prowess in order to negotiate from a position of strength. He placed priority on arms control issues and believed resisting Soviet military power remained the basis for US strategy, yet he hoped this would develop into a more stable and constructive US-Soviet relationship.

In order to pursue these objectives, Shultz suggested a four-part framework for guiding negotiations with the Soviet Union; arms control, regional issues, human rights, and economic relations. Indeed, the framework would go on to guide US negotiations with the Soviets over the following years, providing a realistic roadmap for the administration. On the issue of human rights, Shultz did not advocate applying large-scale pressure in order to affect change within the internal Soviet system as Pipes had called for, but advocated “private diplomacy, leading to results, not counter-productive public embarrassment of Moscow”²⁸⁰. Clark and Lenczowski hit back, telling Reagan the new memo was “an almost identical repetition” of Shultz’s January message to the president. They believed the memo contained “several questionable assumptions” and the reasons given by Shultz for intensified dialogue with the Soviets were “weak, and unconvincing as they reflect a wishful-thinking perception about the nature of the Soviet system”. Lenczowski questioned the purpose of increasing dialogue, along with the prospects for Soviet concessions. He was troubled by Shultz’s lack of focus on the internal nature of the Soviet system, and the absence of any moral or ideological component to the policy framework, which he felt was vital in convincing the American people that Reagan had crafted a new and moralistic foreign policy²⁸¹.

²⁷⁹ Douglas Brinkley, February 15, 1983, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), p131

²⁸⁰ Memo Shultz to Reagan, “USG-Soviet Relations- Where Do We Want To Be And How Do We Get There?”, March 3, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁸¹ “Suggested Talking Points for Meeting on US-Soviet Relations”, Prepared by John Lenczowski, March 10, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

As 1983 progressed, tensions with the Soviets began to reach fever pitch and Reagan faced foreign policy challenges across the board, with violence in the Middle East escalating in particular worrying fashion. He continued to push for an American military build-up, while also becoming fascinated with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), or 'Star Wars'. This controversial and untested concept would potentially make the threat of nuclear war a thing of the past through the use of lasers to target incoming ICBM's. Reagan was even willing to share details of this project with the Soviets, who viewed the matter with suspicion²⁸². Reagan believed the logic of Mutually Assured Destruction to be utterly abhorrent and thought there had to be a better way to secure peace which didn't involve threatening the world with nuclear Armageddon. The Soviets had broken off negotiations with the US in May, in response to the deployment of American Pershing missiles to Europe, and alarm had now taken hold in Moscow, with the Central Committee of the CPSU announcing, "by placing American missiles on the European continent (in addition to those medium-range nuclear weapons already possessed by NATO), the US and NATO on the whole would like fundamentally to change the existing balance of forces in Europe in their favour, which would worsen the over-all military-strategic situation and would increase the danger of nuclear war"²⁸³.

The hardliners in the Reagan administration still remained committed to following an uncompromising approach towards the Soviets, but the growing influence of Shultz was now clear. Having initially been caught off guard by Reagan's public endorsement of SDI, Shultz saw it as an opportunity to continue to foster the president's instincts towards improving bilateral relations with the Soviets. Reagan was clearly beginning to change direction, writing "some of the NSC staff are too hard-line and don't think any approach should be made to the Soviets ... I think I'm hard-line and will never appease but I want to try and let them see there is a better world if they'll show by deed that they want to get along with the free world"²⁸⁴.

In June 1983, Shultz gained an important partner inside the White House, as Jack Matlock joined the NSC as the president's new Soviet expert. Matlock was a career diplomat who had recently served as US ambassador to Czechoslovakia. He was deeply knowledgeable of Russian history and culture, spoke several East European languages, and although

²⁸² SDI literature

²⁸³ "CC CPSU on Withdrawal from Strategic Arms Reduction Negotiations (1)," May 28, 1983, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, TsKhSD.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119014>

²⁸⁴ Brinkley, *Reagan Diaries*, p142

fundamentally opposed to the communist system he was non-adversarial and believed the Soviet Union was capable of peaceful reform. Matlock was also interested in the Soviet nationalities and was eager to see the US government expand its knowledge of the ethnic currents within the USSR, although not in order to ferment instability but to better understand the internal forces within Soviet society. Matlock would bring some much-needed experience and sobriety to the Soviet affairs team on the NSC, currently being marshalled by the youthful Lenczowski and Paula Dobriansky, the daughter of the famous Ukrainian émigré activist Lev Dobriansky²⁸⁵. With Matlock allying with Shultz's position, bringing his experience and keen insights to the NSC, the president began to move in a more restrained direction, with Shultz's four-part framework largely forming the basis of the US approach to the USSR moving forward, much to the dismay of the administration's hardliners. As Shultz recalls, "the efforts of the staff at the NSC to keep him (Reagan) out were beginning to break down"²⁸⁶.

The Nationalities Working Group expands its activities

Despite the tempering of Reagan's thinking towards Moscow, the jockeying for position between Shultz and Clark, and Shultz's proposed four-part framework for dialogue with the Soviets growing in importance, it was NSDD-75 which continued to provide impetus for the goal of promoting political change inside the USSR. And targeting the Soviet nationalities persisted on the minds of some policymakers within the Reagan administration as an effective way to do this. In March, the director of the USIA wrote to Reagan suggesting a raft of initiatives aimed at influencing the internal dynamics of the USSR, and alongside radio broadcasting the USIA advocated for increased exchanges and an exhibits program which would allow for greater penetration of Soviet society and were in line with NSDD 75 and the basic task of US policy which was the "promotion of political change within the USSR"²⁸⁷. Likewise, the Nationalities Working Group was also enthusiastic about building on the president's directive, and in early 1983 NWG members at the Soviet Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in the State Department launched 'Soviet Nationalities Survey', which was to become a quarterly published journal which explored internal Soviet developments with regards to its national minorities, with the aim of raising the profile of Soviet nationalities problems within US government circles²⁸⁸.

²⁸⁵ "Reagan Getting a Soviet Expert as New Adviser", *New York Times*, June 5, 1983

²⁸⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p162

²⁸⁷ Memo Director USIA to Reagan, "Promoting Political Change in the USSR", March 16, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁸⁸ Kuzio, *U.S. support for Ukraine's liberation during the Cold War*, p10

The first edition of ‘Soviet Nationalities Survey’ was published in March 1983, and covered developments during the period January to March 1983. There was commentary on Andropov’s initial remarks about his nationalities policy at the 60th anniversary celebration of the Soviet Union in December 1982, and again at the Supreme Soviet Presidium meeting in January 1983. The journal suggested that Andropov viewed nationality issues as delicate and potentially explosive, and would pursue a cautious, pragmatic policy based on economic imperatives and sociological research, rather than an ideologically-based leaning toward either Russian or non-Russian nationalities. However, the Survey suggested that his “plan to increase economic integration and regional specialization throughout the USSR, however, may in fact exacerbate nationality problems” while suggesting Andropov had conceded the, “problems of relations among nations have not been removed from the agenda. He also implied that much current Soviet thinking in this area was inadequate”. The first edition also included commentary on the role of non-Russian languages in the Soviet military, changes in the leadership structure of the Muslim republics of Central Asia, and details of arrests in the Baltics for nationalist agitation²⁸⁹. The Survey was edited and written by Special Assistant for Soviet Nationalities Alvin Kapusta and INR staffer Paul Goble, who were experts on the Soviet nationalities at the INR and heavily involved with the NWG. Despite being published by an arm of the State Department, the initiative mainly had the support of the NSC in the White House as the State Department remained cautious on the question of Soviet nationalities. The publication ran from 1983 to 1989, when Goble left to join Radio Liberty²⁹⁰.

Emboldened by the US government’s newly mandated focus on the internal structure of the Soviet Union, the NWG began to draft a set of prescriptions for US policy towards the Soviet nationalities which they hoped would form an entirely separate, yet complimentary, policy program to run alongside NSDD-75. This would be a key document and members of the NWG laboured hard to produce a detailed and realistic proposal to place before the president. The NWG took NSDD-75 as inspiration for their proposals, tying their platform explicitly to the ideological thrust and focus on the internal nature of the Soviet regime outlined in the administration’s official Soviet strategy. Lenczowski was a driving force behind this project and took on a lot of the responsibility for drafting the proposals, which the group worked on over the course of early 1983. Also involved was Jack Matlock, who while not sharing the more hard-line anti-Soviet views of some of the group’s members, had long advocated

²⁸⁹ “Soviet Nationalities Survey, No. 1, January 1- March 31, 1983”, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 28, Nationalities, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

²⁹⁰ Kuzio, U.S. support for Ukraine’s liberation during the Cold War, p10

for expanding US government knowledge of the Soviet nationalities and saw the NWG as the ideal forum for accomplishing this²⁹¹.

In July 1983, after consultation across various agencies, the NWG had produced a draft document which explored the basic premise and rationale behind the need for a specific NSDD on the subject of the Soviet nationalities, over and above that of NSDD-75. On July 5, after the Department of Defense had made some alterations, the group held an important meeting at the State Department to discuss the progress of the proposed NSDD, with the meeting being smaller and more focused than usual in order to reach a consensus²⁹². The draft proposal for an NSDD on the Soviet nationalities began by immediately tying their efforts to the Reagan's recent directive on US policy towards the Soviet Union, stating "as set forth in NSDD-75, US policy toward the USSR is to aim at: containing and over time reversing Soviet expansionism, promoting change within the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic system, and reaching agreements with the Soviet Union that protect and enhance US interests and are consistent with the principles of strict reciprocity and mutual interest. As part of that policy, the USG shall pursue a rejuvenated effort to understand and to influence ethnic and national developments within the Soviet Union". NSDD 75 had called for more focus on the internal nature of the Soviet regime and had expressly mentioned ethnic groups within the Soviet Union as an area of interest for the US government. In light of this, the document suggested four objectives in this area, which aligned with overall American policy towards the USSR;

1 To encourage changes within the Soviet Union that foster diversity, pluralism, decentralization, democracy and conformity with internationally-accepted norms of justice and morality.

2 To promote a more accurate understanding of the nature and actions of the Soviet Union by drawing attention to its colonial and expansionist characteristics, and by undermining the notion that the expansion of communist rule is an irreversible phenomenon.

²⁹¹ Ambassador Mark Palmer, Oral History Transcript, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, October 30, 1997

²⁹² Memo Smith to Matlock, "Nationalities Working Group Meeting", July 5, 1983, Box 28, Nationalities, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

3 To create an institutional structure within the USG, and more broadly in the U.S., to strengthen and sustain our capabilities for understanding and influencing Soviet ethnic and national developments.

4 Consistent with NSDD-75, to increase our presence and activities in the Soviet Union while ensuring that the resulting benefits are not counterbalanced by drawbacks of any increased presence and activities the Soviets may demand in return. ·

These objectives facilitate a clear view of the role US policymakers believed the Soviet nationalities could play in American grand strategy and it offers a glimpse into the way Reagan administration officials thought about this subject. US government interest in the Soviet nationalities stemmed from the desire to foster moves towards greater pluralism and decentralisation within the USSR, with self-determination among the national groups clearly a cause in line with this goal. They felt it was absolutely necessary for the US government to gain a better grasp of ethnic issues inside the Soviet Union in order to understand the drivers of its international activities and wanted to see institutionalised efforts within the government to comprehend and attempt to influence developments among the Soviet nationalities. An increased presence in the USSR would play an important role in this, but they must remain prudent about the potential trade-offs involved in the Soviets demanding reciprocity.

The document went on to consider the implementation of these policies and called for an “action program” which would be based on “the reaffirmation of our commitment to the rights and proper interests of the various ethnic and national groups within the Soviet Union, including (as appropriate) their rights to practice their religions, to provide traditional education to their children, to emigrate and to enjoy national independence”. This action program involved a series of measures which the US government should take moving forward; increase its capabilities for understanding and influencing developments within the Soviet Union affecting ethnic and national groups, increase its ability to broadcast radio programs to Soviet ethnic and national groups and otherwise increase the flow of information into the USSR, continue to recognize the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, increase UN activities, work with the appropriate public bodies, such as the CSCE, Amnesty International, and other interested religious and political organizations, explore further the implications of the Afghan resistance movement for its policy toward Soviet Muslim minorities, establish a larger U.S. official presence in the USSR, initiate new cultural, informational, and educational exchanges, and increase public statements on Soviet abuse

of ethnic and national groups. It was an ambitious and expansive program to incorporate the national minorities of the Soviet Union more fully into US Cold War strategy²⁹³.

US consulate in Kiev

In line with these prescriptions, and the emphasis on increasing the presence of the US government on the territory of the USSR, the old idea of opening a US consulate in Kiev was revived and given serious consideration within the Reagan administration. While the NWG pushed for a better understanding of, and capabilities to reach, the countless Soviet nationalities which were scattered across the empire, it was also important to make serious efforts to establish a footing in the non-Russian republics themselves. Indeed, there was a recognition within the White House that Ukraine was the most important of the non-Russian Soviet republics, and it may be to America's benefit to gain a foothold there. Most policymakers in the West had given little thought to Ukraine since the end of World War II, knowing little about the territory.

Nevertheless, Ukraine was absolutely vital to the structure of the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was home to millions of Soviet citizens, a large percentage of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, and was an agricultural powerhouse. Ukraine also played an almost mythical role in Russian consciousness as the spiritual birthplace of 'Russian civilization' and Russian Orthodoxy. In the aftermath of the brutal Russian Civil War which followed the Revolution, Ukraine had been incorporated into the USSR and suffered cultural repression and famine during the Stalinist years. After a flirtation with a more nationalist-infused form of communism under Petro Shelest during the 1960's, Ukraine became one of the more hard-line of the Soviet republics as the Cold War wore on. The Ukrainian Communist Party boss Volodymyr Shcherbytsky was appointed during the Brezhnev era and held a tight grip on power right until late 1989, with Ukrainian religious believers, political dissidents, human rights activists and nationalists labouring under his rule. Standing guard at the crossroads of East and West, empires had fought over Ukraine's territorial expanse for centuries, and the vastness of the Ukrainian steppe was difficult for Western minds to penetrate. Within the West however, millions of Ukrainian emigres had found a home, and they had not forgotten their ancestral homeland or their compatriots who still suffered there under the Soviet yolk.

²⁹³ Memo Smith to Matlock, "Nationalities Working Group Meeting", July 5, 1983, Box 28, Nationalities, US-USSR 1983 (March), Series II: USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

As the Cold War wore on, their plight began to attract the attention of human rights activists, and indeed of Western governments. As nationalist sentiment began to rise across the USSR and the Soviet dissident movement came to prominence during the 1970s, Congress and elements of the US government began to pay more attention to the long-simmering 'Soviet nationalities question', human rights, and religious freedom within the USSR²⁹⁴. Incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was the primary non-Russian republic of the USSR. Home to over 50 million inhabitants, its fertile lands formed the centrepiece of Soviet agriculture and its industrial and mining infrastructure provided vital output for the economy. The Soviet military bases located in Ukraine were home to one third of the USSR's nuclear arsenal, and its historic role as a buffer between the Russian heartland and the rest of Europe was an integral part of Soviet territorial security.

In this respect, the communist party leadership in the Kremlin viewed Ukraine in much the same way as their predecessors in Tsarist Russia had; it provided security along its borders and played a pivotal role in the maintenance of a favourable balance of power in Eurasia. By the late 1970's, it also remained one of the most religious and nationally-conscious parts of the Soviet Union, despite enduring decades of Soviet anti-religious propaganda and waves of Russification at the hands of the old Tsarist regime and the communists who now oversaw its territory. Ukrainian nationalism was never truly extinguished, with the west of Ukraine in particular remaining a hotbed of nationalist sentiment. Historically more religiously diverse than other parts of Eastern Europe, Ukraine boasted an Orthodox majority with large Catholic and Protestant minorities, lending it the moniker 'The Bible Belt of the Soviet Union'²⁹⁵. It was also home to a lively political dissident scene, inspired by the Helsinki accords and connected to the growing transnational network of human rights activists. Ukraine was on the radar.

Plans to open a US consulate in Ukraine had been mooted and seriously discussed with the Soviets since the mid-1970s, with the USSR gaining a consulate in New York in return as part of the deal. There were always concerns around the issue of reciprocity and allowing the Soviets, and hence the KGB, further access to the United States. It was quite simply a matter of balancing potential gains for the US in entering Ukraine with the negatives which

²⁹⁴ For fine works on Soviet Ukraine during the Cold War see, Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Bohdan Nahaylo, *The Ukrainian Resurgence* (London: Hurst and Company, 1999); Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence*, Second Edition (London: MacMillan Press, 2000).

²⁹⁵ Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p1.

would come with an additional Soviet presence on American soil. By the end of the 1970s the agreement looked likely to go ahead, until the Carter administration shelved plans to open the consulate in 1980, in a response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan²⁹⁶. This was a move criticised by Matlock in his memoirs because it, “harmed US interests more than it hurt the Soviet Union, meaning there was no one in Ukraine to take care of American interests or follow political developments in this important non-Russian Soviet republic”²⁹⁷. Haig had also discussed the issue with Gromyko back in late 1981, when the Soviet foreign minister pushed him for an answer on the matter, claiming authorities in Kiev were keen to use the building originally set aside for the US consulate should the Americans decide against taking it over²⁹⁸.

A year later the State Department drafted a report on the matter, which Haig had shared with Reagan. The State Department believed the project had merit but was probably not worth pursuing at that point in spring 1982, concluding, “there is a strong case for reversing a wrongheaded Carter sanction ... and restarting the process leading to establishment of a U.S. official presence in the heart of the Ukraine. The Soviets are pressing us to fish or cut bait on a fine Kiev consulate building they have prepared for us, but we have neither occupied nor made payments on. But there is a downside. The intelligence community is lukewarm in its support for our establishing in Kiev. The FBI was resigned to opening in New York before, but now is opposed to an additional Soviet presence there. We will draw some political heat in any event by a decision to move forward ... After considering the pros and cons, I would propose to risk the building by telling the Soviets we would like to keep it but are not in a position to move forward to negotiations on reopening now”²⁹⁹.

Officials within the Reagan White House now believed the reopening of a US consulate in Kiev could provide the United States with an important opening in this strategically important Soviet republic, and a driving force for this development was actually the secretary of state George Shultz, who by now was a figure of disdain for many of the

²⁹⁶ Memo Brzezinski to Mondale and Brown, “Results of the NSC Meeting”, January 2, 1980, National Security Council Institutional Files, 1977-1981, Afghanistan, Volume XII, FRUS 1977-1980

²⁹⁷ Jack F. Matlock Jr, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, (Random house, New York, 2004), p15.

²⁹⁸ MemCon, “Meeting Between Secretary Haig and Minister Gromyko”, September 28, 1981, Clark Files, Haig/Gromyko Meetings, January 1981- January 1983, Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

²⁹⁹ Memo Haig to Reagan, “US-Soviet Relations over the Near Term”, April 2, 1982, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, USSR, January 1981-January 1983, Volume III, Soviet Union, FRUS, 1981-1988

hardliners in the White House during Reagan's first term³⁰⁰. In March 1983, Shultz had raised the issue with Reagan during the period when he was beginning to suggest an alternative path forward for dealing with the Soviets, one which differed completely in tone and emphasis from NSDD-75. Shultz believed it was important to negotiate a new US-Soviet cultural agreement and push for the opening of an American consulate in Ukraine, suggesting to Reagan, "the negotiation of a new cultural agreement to enforce reciprocity and enhance US ideological penetration of the Soviet Union itself" and the "opening of a US consulate in Kiev to establish a new US presence in the Ukraine"³⁰¹. For Shultz, this was perfectly in line with the goals of NSDD-75, and in his memoirs he describes how he highlighted this point to the president³⁰².

Shultz argued that a formal framework of cultural exchanges was the only way to truly penetrate the USSR with American values and ideals. Shultz affirmed, the "opening of US and Soviet consulates in Kiev and New York would have the advantage of getting us onto new Soviet terrain while increasing the Soviet presence here only marginally.... Our new consulate would be the first Western mission in the capital of the Ukraine ... a US presence there (Ukraine) would also help us broaden our access to and ideological penetration of Soviet society"³⁰³. This suggestion provoked the ire of Clark, who remained deeply suspicious of both Shultz's recent manoeuvrings and the prospect of an increased Soviet presence in the US. In response to Shultz's suggestions, he told Reagan, "I have strong reservations about State's two proposals for bilateral relations. The first, a new cultural agreement, seems innocuous enough. But the issue is part of a whole complex of questions that relate to reciprocity and controlling the KGB presence in our country ... for now we should not yet authorise any negotiations until the issue has been thoroughly aired at an NSC meeting. The second proposal is equally problematical: opening a US consulate in Kiev and a Soviet consulate in New York. This also needs further study"³⁰⁴.

³⁰⁰ David Foglesong, *The American Mission and the 'Evil Empire': The Crusade for a 'Free Russia' Since 1881*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p182

³⁰¹ Memo Shultz to Reagan, "Next Steps in US-Soviet Relations", March 16, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR (1983 March), Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³⁰² George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph Diplomacy, Power, and the Victory of the American Deal*, (Prentice and Hall, 1993), p276. Shultz explains that Vice President Bush had warned him that his memos to Reagan on Soviet policy were being countered by "absolutely vicious" memos to the president from the NSC staff.

³⁰³ Ibid, p276

³⁰⁴ Memo Clark to Reagan (drafted by Lenczowski), "State's Latest Memorandum on US-Soviet Relations/ Next Steps in US-Soviet Relations", March 22, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR (1983 March), Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

Clark, the hardliner who favoured attacking and weakening the internal nature of the Soviet system in line with the objectives set out by NSDD-75, seemed to be baulking when presented with a concrete proposal for doing so. Clark's hostility to communism and trepidation at the prospect of an additional Soviet footprint in the US were giving him pause, his ongoing feud with Shultz perhaps also on his mind. Shultz, the moderate, now seemed to be pushing for an ideological incursion into Soviet territory, calling upon the provisions of NSDD-75 to do so. Shultz was eager to build a degree of trust with the Soviet leadership, and to promote understanding of each other's societies through cultural exchanges. Nevertheless, this episode, along with Matlock's involvement with the NWG, should serve as reminders that it may be too easy to cast officials as 'hardliners' and 'moderates', 'hawks' and 'doves'. Quite often there is plenty of overlap between the positions. Shultz may have favoured taking a more measured and less ideological approach toward the Soviets, but he was fully committed to seeing American democratic values take root around the world. As Ambassador Palmer recalled in his dealings with Shultz, "George Shultz believes that America is a great country. He believes that democracy is a universal system and that all people should some day be free. He is very clear headed about that. In that respect, he is very unusual in the American foreign policy establishment"³⁰⁵. Shultz stood firmly in the tradition of Republican realism; prudent in approach, yet internationalist in mindset.

NSDD-75 had set the standard for US policy towards the Soviet Union, and now the task of crafting tangible and realistic policies around its framework had begun in earnest. Despite the fears around reciprocity, support was growing for the need to agree a structure for cultural exchanges with the USSR and to explore the opening of further US consulates in the Soviet Union. NSDD-75 was the perfect vehicle for moving this goal forward. In June 1983, the NSC organised an Interdepartmental Group meeting to consider steps to implement the provisions of NSDD 75, featuring representatives across all the main governmental and intelligence agencies. Noting that NSDD 75 had called for building and sustaining a major ideological/political offensive with the goal of bring about evolutionary change within the USSR as a priority near-term objective of for US policy, the meeting would formally discuss concrete steps which could be taken to translate that mandate into specific moves geared to the general objective. With the increased focus on promoting internal pressure inside the USSR, penetrating Soviet territory with US ideology and exploiting vulnerabilities inside the Soviet empire, the opening of an American consulate in Ukraine could be one such step.

³⁰⁵ Ambassador Mark Palmer, Oral History Transcript, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, October 30, 1997

There was a view that this would be entirely consistent with Reagan's broad strategy and would constitute a "prudent and effective" step towards actually implementing it³⁰⁶.

If the US was willing to explore an endeavour which would both serve its interests while being to the mutual advantage of the Soviets, it was also hoped this would project an image of America effectively managing the US-Soviet relationship, which in turn would sustain support from Congress and the American people for the "new, tougher approach to the USSR". While aware that these steps may be perceived as a weakening of the sanctions imposed on the Soviets as a result of their excursion into Afghanistan, there was no desire to return to "business as usual". There was a belief that, like the grain embargo, the decision by the Carter administration to shelve the Kiev consulate plans in response to the war in Afghanistan, after years of negotiations, had actually hurt US interests more than it had the Soviets.

Along with Kiev, the Nationalities Working Group had also suggested the opening of another US consulate in Tashkent, deep in Soviet Uzbekistan³⁰⁷. Consulates in Tashkent and Kiev would be considered feasible means of increasing US contact with the USSR's largest non-Russian nationalities, as Congress and the highly mobilised Ukrainian American community pushed the administration for recognition of human rights violations in Ukraine³⁰⁸. While there was a recognition that a potential consulate in Kiev would be closely monitored by the Soviets, the rationale for pressing ahead was strong, it would create "an official US presence in the Ukraine (and Central Asia) ... would contribute to building internal pressure to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism and promoting change within the Soviet Union ... by its activities in a sensitive region (or regions) of the USSR. It would provide a new base or bases for contacts with nationality, religious and dissident groups in a period when nationalism is arguably the strongest internal pressure on the Soviet regime, as well as developing US government expertise in these areas" and the "establishment of new consulates in these areas would demonstrate our concerns over human rights and nationalities in the Soviet Union in tangible form".

³⁰⁶ Memo Hill to Interagency Group, "Meeting on Proposed Steps to Implement NSDD 75", June 13, 1983, US Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

³⁰⁷ Memo Hill to Interagency Group, "Meeting on Proposed Steps to Implement NSDD 75", June 13, 1983, US Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

³⁰⁸ "Famine Committee in DC Launches Media Campaign" and "Advisors Meet Presidential Assistant", *The Ukrainian Weekly*, June 26, 1983, Vol. LI, No. 26

This was a very real way of turning the policy prescriptions of the Nationalities Working Group into actionable measures towards the Soviet nationalities. With regards to the new suggestion by the NWG of opening a consulate in Tashkent, it was believed “over the next years and decades, nationalities tensions are likely to be even more severe in Soviet Central Asia than in the Ukraine, and a consulate in Tashkent would be even more useful to us as a source of American influence than a mission in Kiev ... If the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan continues, having people in Tashkent would put us “behind the lines” of a major theatre of Soviet expansionism”, although there was also a recognition that the Soviets would be less inclined to be open to this proposal, and it would cost more money³⁰⁹.

In July 1983 the State Department drafted a Terms of Reference to guide negotiations with the Soviets over cultural exchanges and future consulates, carried out at the request of Clark, who wished to explore the matter further. He had asked State to organise a series of interagency meetings to generate a strategy paper for negotiating with the Soviets on the establishment of Consulates in Kiev and New York³¹⁰. The Terms of Reference stated that, “the President has approved offering the Soviets negotiation of a cultural exchanges agreement”, and had, “approved in principle the desirability of establishing new Consulates in Kiev and New York”, while Shultz had informed the Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin of this development on June 18. Again, drawing on the provisions of NSDD-75, which provided the policy basis for seeking an agreement “to promote the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system”, and, “. . . to reach agreements which protect and enhance US interests and are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest”, the State Department outlined the need for a formal agreement with the Soviets to achieve these goals, stating “in the absence of an agreement the Soviets are able to do things in the cultural, informational, and ideological areas for which we cannot enforce reciprocity. An agreement would enhance our ability to require reciprocity and add to our means of ideologically penetrating Soviet society”.

The report also noted, “at the time of the suspension in January 1980, we were approximately six months away from completion of the work on the Consulate office building and officially opening our Consulate in Kiev. The absence of a Consulate has deprived us of an important source of intelligence collection and of continuing contacts with important nationality and religious groups in the area. Establishing the Consulate will mark a major

³⁰⁹ Memo Hill to Interagency Group, “Meeting on Proposed Steps to Implement NSDD 75”, June 13, 1983, US Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

³¹⁰ Memo Hill to Clark, “Strategy Paper for Negotiations with the Soviet Union on the Establishment of Consulates in Kiev and New York”, US Department of State, August 5, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron August 1983, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

new U.S. penetration into this geographically key area which contains the second largest Soviet nationality group". An interagency group was formed to develop a negotiating strategy and produce the first draft of a strategy paper which would form the basis of negotiations with the Soviets, while also exploring the logistical requirements for sending an Advance Team to Kiev in the near future³¹¹. On agreement, State planned to forward the strategy to the NSC. Matlock passed the Terms of Reference onto Clark, telling him that, "we do not yet have an official reply from the Soviets on our proposal for negotiations, but State anticipates that they will accept our proposal and Soviet Embassy officials have indicated that they may have an official reply on July 15". Matlock went on, "the terms of reference, while general, appear to be sound pending elaboration of detailed negotiating position"³¹².

When the State Department officially submitted the strategy paper for the prospective Kiev consulate to Clark in August, it noted that some clarification was required from the Soviets as to whether the building which was originally earmarked for the consulate was still available, and highlighted some of the internal disagreement which still existed among government agencies, with Hill telling the national security adviser, "there are still some differences of view among agencies, and these are set forth in the paper transmitted herewith, which has been cleared by the FBI, NSA, CIA and USIA"³¹³. "State and NSA agree that if the Soviets tell us they have kept the building available, we should accept it. We have already invested \$1.5 million in renovation, which would be lost if we refused the building. Moreover, the negotiations for a more desirable site would be long and the end result would not necessarily be a site preferable to the one we now have. If the current site remains available, State and NSA believe that we should send a team to Kiev as soon as possible for an inspection and evaluation of the work and time that will be required to put it into suitable condition. The FBI, on the other hand, would prefer that we seek new facilities whether or not the Soviets are willing to make the previously designated office site available".

³¹¹ US-USSR Cultural Exchanges Agreement: Terms of Reference" and "Kiev and New York Consulate: Terms of Reference", US Department of State, July 14, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron July 1983 (1), Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

³¹² Memo Matlock to Clark, "Terms of Reference for Negotiations with USSR on Cultural Exchange Agreement and Consulates", July 14, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron July 1983 (1), Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

³¹³ Memo Hill to Clark, "Strategy Paper for Negotiations with the Soviet Union on the Establishment of Consulates in Kiev and New York", August 5, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron July 1983 (1), Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

The report also discussed practical issues of funding, staffing levels and then laid out the policy objectives of the new consulate, identifying why a US presence in Ukraine would benefit American policy, stating, “in noting that the USG should seek to reach agreements which “protect and enhance US interests and are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity”, NSDD-75 provides the fundamental policy framework for establishing the new Consulates. A Consulate in Kiev ... will give us a unique vantage point for economic reporting, a base in the Soviet agricultural heartland for crop monitoring, a facility to provide on-the-spot consular protection and assistance to American visitors in the area, and the opportunity to initiate new cultural, informational, and educational exchanges, thereby heightening awareness of US values and goals in the region”. Ideally, the State Department wanted to open the new consulate in summer 1985³¹⁴. There was now a recognition within the US government that increased penetration of the non-Russian Soviet republics was a desirable objective for US policy towards the USSR, as laid out by NSDD-75. Ukraine had been identified as a key Soviet republic for its geostrategic, historical, economic and cultural position within the USSR, and the opening of a consulate in Kiev, which had been described by Richard Nixon in 1972 as the “mother of all Russian cities” would provide an excellent opening to gather information on non-Russian Soviet society and to create a crack for American ideology to drip through³¹⁵.

Matlock discussed State’s strategy paper with Clark a few days later, telling him “the Soviets had long resisted an American office in Kiev, offering instead less advantageous locations, but finally agreed to Kiev under the pressure of reaching agreements for the 1974 summit”. He told Clark that the background to the plan was murky and the status of the building was unclear. Having spent well over a million dollars in preparing the building for use during the 1970s, since being ordered to abandon the project by President Carter the American government had not paid any rent on the building whatsoever, and the Soviets were now, understandably, using it for their own needs. In turn, the Soviet Union had already identified and purchased a building in New York, which they planned to use as a new Soviet consulate in the event an agreement could be reached.

Thus, Matlock informed Clark, “this complicated background is relevant to some of the questions raised in the strategy paper. Broadly speaking, our options are to aim for an opening as quickly as possible, and thus establish our presence in the capital of the largest non-Russian republic, or to attempt to improve on the arrangements already negotiated,

³¹⁴ “Strategy Paper Kiev and New York Consulates”, US Department of State, August 5, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron July 1983 (1), Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

³¹⁵ Martin McCauley, *The Cold War 1949-2016* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), p277

which could entail considerable delay with little prospect of significant improvement”³¹⁶. Matlock was eager to bring the plans to fruition, feeling it would be hugely beneficial for the US to have an increased presence among the Soviet nationalities through the opening of the consulate in Ukraine, and he was comfortable using the existing building which had been secured a few years previously. There was also growing support for the project in Congress, with 42 members of the House of Representatives and one Senator signing a letter to President Reagan urging him to press ahead with the opening of a consulate in Kiev, and increased demands for the US to officially mark the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian famine³¹⁷.

With regards to staffing levels, Matlock wanted to set the number at the level required for running the new consulate in Kiev without taking staff away from the US embassy in Moscow, and thus impairing its ability to function. He believed the proposed number of 16 was adequate, meaning the Soviets would be permitted the same level for their new consulate in New York, telling Clark “this would preserve reciprocity, and while the FBI’s task in New York would be increased, its additional problems would be no greater than those faced by the KGB in Kiev”. Matlock conceded that a compromise was required, but he felt the advantage of having an American consulate in a vital non-Russian republic was worth it, “although it is unfortunate that the Soviets were allowed to purchase their consulate building in New York, it will be most difficult to turn the clock back on this arrangement. In the interest of moving as rapidly as possible to establish our presence in Kiev (a net gain for us, since we have no one there now) in return for a small incremental gain for the Soviets (they already have hundreds of officials in New York), I would recommend using the Soviet ownership of their building in New York as leverage to insist upon favourable long-term rental arrangements in Kiev”. Matlock was perturbed by the absence of support for the project being shown by the CIA, “the apparent lack of interest of the CIA in establishing a base in Kiev when it opens seems questionable in view of the objective set forth in NSDD-75 to increase our presence in the USSR, particularly in minority areas³¹⁸”.

³¹⁶ Memo Matlock to Clark, “Strategy Paper for Consulates in Kiev and New York”, August 8, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron August 1983, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

³¹⁷ “Lawmakers Back Kiev Consulate”, *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 4, 1983, Box 7, Ukrainian Issues, Series I, Subject Files, Katherine Chumachenko Files, RRPL.

³¹⁸ Memo Matlock to Clark, “Strategy Paper for Consulates in Kiev and New York”, August 8, 1983, Box 1, Matlock Chron August 1983, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL

Tensions mount

Nevertheless, the terms of engagement had been set, and negotiations aimed at securing a new entry point to reach the Soviet nationalities were now underway. And then, before talks could really get going, US-Soviet relations dipped dramatically when the Soviets shot down a Korean passenger plane which had accidentally entered the USSR's airspace in September, killing all on board and sparking international outrage. The Reagan administration, and the president in particular, reacted with righteous fury to the downing of KAL 007 and Soviet attempts to cover up their role in the tragedy. The hard-liners in the White House sensed an opening. Lenczowski told Clark, "the only possible motive for this crime was to commit an act of terrorism to instil ever more fear in the hearts of the people of the free world". And he blamed the softening stance of the administration as emboldening the Soviets, saying "US policy as it now stands attempts to be a formula for perpetual (at best) coexistence with the USSR ... Secretary's Shultz's arguments that the Administration's efforts to renew American strength have addressed the balance of power enough that we can have "intensified dialogue" with the Soviets are either inaccurate or premature. The Soviets are not convinced that the current attempt to revive American strength is any more than a transitional phenomenon ... the net result of this Soviet assessment was that they felt they could take this opportunity not just to intimidate the world, but to test the president and the United States"³¹⁹.

The Soviets were edgy, especially after the US and NATO decision to deploy more medium range missiles to Europe, with the Soviet Minister of Defence Marshal Dmitri Ustinov telling Warsaw Pact member states in October, "the source for the growing danger of war is evident ... the source consists of the openly aggressive policy from the United States and NATO against the USSR and the other countries of the socialist community, and against all progressive forces in the world ... the "crusade" against communism and in fact against the USSR and the other countries of the socialist community, announced 1 and a half years ago by U.S. President Reagan, has not just stayed a slogan but became a program of action and basis for U.S. and NATO policy. Its main goal consists in its determination to "destroy socialism as a social-political system". Nothing more, and nothing less"³²⁰. Only weeks

³¹⁹ Memo Lenczowski to Clark, "The Korean Airliner, Soviet Motives and US Policy", September 3, 1983, Box 4, John Lenczowski Memos, William P Clark Files, RRPL.

³²⁰ "Statement by CPSU Central Committee and USSR Minister of Defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union D. F. Ustinov, at the extraordinary session of the Committee of Defense Ministers of Warsaw Treaty Member States on 20 October 1983 [in Berlin]," October 20, 1983, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Federal Archives of Germany, Military Branch (BA-MA), Freiburg i. Br. Call Number: DVW 1/71040. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111077>

later, in November, NATO undertook a military exercise which simulated an all-out nuclear strike on the Warsaw Pact, which the KGB believed may in fact be a cover for a genuine nuclear assault. The now-infamous Able Archer 83 incident proved to be one of the hottest flashpoints of the Cold War, with the Soviets genuinely in fear of an American-led nuclear first strike³²¹.

In these frenzied conditions, talks on the new Kiev embassy and cultural exchanges simply stalled, with Shultz telling Gromyko that the agreement in principle which they made the previous summer still stood, but the timing needed to be right and it was very difficult to move forward in the atmosphere of recent months³²². However, while tensions with the Soviets continued to rise, Reagan's domestic position had improved markedly, with the economy performing well and his poll numbers ahead of the 1984 election looking good. There was a feeling that the US had gained an edge in the Cold War struggle and it was now the Soviets who were on the back foot, with the administration believing, "that we have the opportunity to deal with the Soviet Union from more of a position of strength than in previous years. This is due to the progress that we have made over the last three years in a number of areas"³²³.

Reagan concluded the time for dialogue with the Soviets had arrived, and the mounting tensions of recent months had served to underscore the presidents fear of nuclear war and the sheer stakes involved. The end of 1983 and early 1984 marked a period of modulation in the US approach to the Soviet Union, with Reagan now recognising the genuine fear the Soviet leadership had of potential nuclear attack. Matlock and Shultz advised the President that he needed to garner the trust of the Soviets if he wanted to make progress, and policies geared towards "forcing the collapse of the Soviet system" were not the way to achieve this³²⁴. With Judge Clark stepping down as national security adviser at the end of 1983, being replaced by Bud McFarlane, another important hard-line voice had disappeared from the West Wing's corridors. Reagan had also never considered that the Soviet leadership may genuinely fear America, that they may truly worry about a potential US nuclear first

³²¹ For further reading on Able Archer and the 1983 War Scare see, Benjamin B. Fischer, *A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1997); Vojtech Mastny, "How Able Was 'Able Archer'? Nuclear Trigger and Intelligence in Perspective," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 108-123; Nate Jones, ed. *Able Archer 83: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise That Almost Triggered Nuclear War* (New York: New Press, 2016).

³²² Memcon Shultz and Gromyko, January 18, 1984, Box 3, Matlock Chron January 1984 (3), Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³²³ National Security Decision Directive 131, "US Nuclear Arms Control Strategy for 1984", March 31, 1984, RRDL.

³²⁴ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, p76

strike on the USSR. Reagan had wanted America to compete against the Soviets more vigorously, but he had believed that, “the Russians ... considered it unthinkable that the United States would launch a first strike against them”³²⁵. Yet despite these doubts, there still remained a constituency within the US government dedicated to attacking the internal legitimacy of the Soviet system, most notably through exploitation of ethnic tensions.

Elements within the State Department and NSC were still exploring other methods to reach the ethnic groups of the USSR and draw attention to their cause³²⁶. The State Department was looking at ways to boost the public diplomacy campaign against the Soviet Union, which was viewed as an important component in the ideological war of ideas. At the heart of US public diplomacy towards the USSR was “a clear recognition of the fundamental differences between our system and the Soviet system”, but the State Department was concerned at the “growing acceptance of the concept of the moral equivalence of the superpowers” and sought to reverse this trend. Another important theme was the need to “stress our preparedness for a more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union if the Soviets are willing to demonstrate restraint ... it is Soviet behaviour, not US unwillingness for genuine dialogue, which is responsible for the current state of relations”. This was the broad and overarching purpose of US public diplomacy, the underlying thrust was to draw a sharp line of distinction between the American system, and the Soviet one.

The State Department thought it important to emphasise certain areas in particular, and a public diplomacy action plan for US-Soviet relations was sent for Matlock’s approval in September 1983. There was a recognition that the ongoing tension between the US and the USSR reflected the fundamentally adversarial nature of the relationship between the two nations, and in order for US public diplomacy to be successful, “the target audiences should be made aware of aspects of Soviet behaviour which accurately reflect this fundamental relationship”. Attention should be drawn to the hostile nature of Marxism-Leninism and the incompatibility of the Soviet system with US values and ideals. It was important to highlight human rights abuses and the poor treatment of the nationalities inside the USSR in such a way as to contrast this repression with the individual liberty and political democracy of the US.

³²⁵ Reagan quoted in Alan Dobson, “Ronald Reagan’s Strategies and Policies: Of Ideology, Pragmatism, Loyalties and Management Style”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27:4, (Dec 2016), p746-765

³²⁶ Memo Jatrass to Matlock and Raymond, “Action Plan, US-Soviet Relations”, October 7, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (September -October) 2/7, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

By showcasing the “repressiveness and moral bankruptcy of communism”, US public diplomacy would emphasise the “moral superiority” of American ideas. Along with Soviet attempts to stifle free thought and the limitations on personal freedoms, US public diplomacy should specifically shine the spotlight on the denial of national rights to the ethnic groups within the Soviet empire. In particular, public diplomacy should highlight the “fictional right of secession for Union republics in the Soviet constitution, the suppression of national traditions and cultures, suppression of minority languages, history of incorporation of various areas into the USSR, acts of repression against entire nationalities such as the Crimean Tartars, and the calculated exploitation and exacerbation of social divisions”³²⁷. It was important to identify the target audience however. The US domestic media and national press were an important part of this plan, and “special efforts should be made to use media outlets which ... serve broad and representative segments of American public opinion The ethnic press will be a useful channel to the US émigré and ethnic communities, although it scarcely needs to be pressed to support our Soviet policies”. There should also be efforts made to target Congress and the plethora of interest groups which focused on specific aspects of US-Soviet relations, notably the ethnic interest groups representing Ukrainian, Baltic, Armenian and Jewish interests inside the USSR, while academia, trade unions, and audiences and leaders in Europe were also to be targeted.

The report concluded with an appeal to “take advantage of opportunities to convey our views on US-Soviet relations to publics and leaders in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union ... We must ensure that VOA and RFE/RL have the resources needed to explain US policy directly to the peoples of the area. Our public diplomacy must take into account the aspirations and views of the peoples involved”³²⁸. The State Department wanted to reach people across the Soviet Union, and in order to influence foreign target audiences a combination of active US diplomatic dialogue with the Soviet Union and effective public presentation of America’s positions were required, along with greater access to the Soviet media. There was a perception that US-Soviet relations had narrowed to focus on arms control, and it was important to emphasise issues of human rights as a major element in US public diplomacy.

³²⁷ Memo Jatras to Matlock and Raymond, “Action Plan, US-Soviet Relations”, October 7, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (September -October) 2/7, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³²⁸ Memo Jatras to Matlock and Raymond, “Action Plan, US-Soviet Relations”, October 7, 1983, Box 41, US-USSR 1983 (September -October) 2/7, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

Draft NSDD on Soviet nationalities

As 1983 neared its end, the NWG was putting the finishing touches to its draft NSDD proposal, with the aim of submitting it for executive approval before the close of the year. In October, a Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) meeting was convened by Charles Hill at the State Department to take the project forward. The draft paper had now been extensively reviewed at the working level by all agencies and had been approved by all. It was now nearing completion. Chaired by Larry Eagleburger, the meeting included Robert Kimmitt of the NSC, Col John Stanford of the Department of Defence, representatives from the CIA, USIA, Department of Commerce and Joint Chiefs of Staff were all present, as was Donald Gregg, Vice President Bush's chief foreign policy adviser. The purpose of the meeting was to endorse the draft and transmit it to the NSC, where the paper would then be escalated to Reagan via his new national security adviser, Bud McFarlane³²⁹. The paper was approved, and the next step was to put it before the president. The final proposed NSDD on Soviet Ethnic and Minority Groups of Autumn 1983 contained a detailed policy agenda for steering American policy towards the nationality groups inside the USSR, fleshing out the framework of previous drafts. In line with NSDD 75's focus on encouraging change within the Soviet system, the proposed directive suggested, "as part of that policy, and in addition to steps we will be taking with regard to other elements of Soviet society, the United States Government shall pursue a rejuvenated effort to understand and to encourage ethnic and national freedoms within the Soviet Union".

The final proposal identified the three main objectives of US policy in this area to be: to encourage changes within the Soviet Union that fostered diversity, pluralism, decentralization and democracy; to promote a more accurate understanding of the nature and actions of the Soviet Union by drawing attention to its colonial and expansionist characteristics and by undermining the notion that the expansion of communist rule is an irreversible phenomenon; and to create an institutional structure to strengthen and sustain our capabilities for understanding and influencing Soviet ethnic and national developments. The writers of the new NSDD believed these objectives could be met by increasing US government presence on Soviet territory, as had previously been debated earlier in the year with regards to the opening of a consulate in Kiev.

³²⁹ Memo Hill to Gregg, Kimmitt, Robbins, Stanford, Stanley, Collins and unidentified CIA representative, "SIG on Soviet Nationalities Policy", October 21, 1983, US Department of State, General CIA Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

There remained a prudent awareness of the trade-offs associated with such a scenario, the draftees remained cognisant of the Soviet need for reciprocity, stating “such an increase”, in US government presence inside the Soviet Union, “could entail a detrimental increase in Soviet presence and activities in the U.S. Consistent with NSDD-75 and our overall foreign policy, we should work to increase our presence and activities in the USSR if it is determined that the benefits are not exceeded by the drawbacks”. Perhaps appealing to Reagan’s sentimental side, the proposal would be based on US commitment to the “rights and legitimate interests of the various ethnic and national groups under the administration of the Soviet Union, including their rights to practice their religions, to provide traditional education to their children, to emigrate and, as appropriate, to enjoy national independence”³³⁰.

The proposed NSDD laid out an exhaustive list of policy suggestions, beginning with an admission that the US government required better information on the subject. There remained an acceptance that the US government simply didn’t possess a satisfactory knowledge of current Soviet nationality issues, which hampered their ability to fully ameliorate developments inside the Soviet Union which were adversely affecting ethnic and national groups. Thus, the highest priority would be given to increasing US government understanding of this issue through the establishment of a permanent Soviet Nationalities Interagency Group, which would be chaired by the State Department. This new steering group would be given a broad portfolio which included the responsibility for the allocation of sufficient financial and institutional resources to studying Soviet ethnic and national group developments, with the purpose of improving the US government’s patchy understanding of the issue.

There was a realisation that the dire need for more regional specialists with the requisite language skills within the government had led to a lack of expertise on this topic, and steps must be taken to rectify this shortage. These steps included the establishment of an Interagency Career Management Committee for Soviet Nationality Specialists, whose purpose would be to “examine ways to overcome the critical shortage of US government analysts and linguists qualified in Russian and Soviet nationality languages”. The proposed Soviet Nationalities Interagency Group would explore ways to increase US funding to enhance the international awareness of Soviet ethnic and national issues and would also

³³⁰ “United States Policy on Soviet Ethnic and National Groups”, National Security Decision Directive, December 9, 1983, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

participate and inform the decision-making process affecting U.S. policy on Soviet ethnic and national groups through presentation of research and intelligence findings. The Soviet Nationalities Interagency Group would study the desirability of creating a Centre for the Study of Soviet Nationalities, which would be privately run yet funded by the US government. Finally, the Soviet Nationalities Interagency Group would examine the “possibility of cooperating with various private groups which were conducting research and activities in the Soviet Nationalities field”³³¹.

The proposed NSDD also placed high emphasis on the continuation of radio broadcasting into the regions of the USSR to reach the ethnic and national groups there, and actually called for an increase in capabilities for this endeavour. Alongside a program to modernise and upgrade Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, the paper called for the government to assign a high priority to enlarging the number of Soviet languages which the radios were able to broadcast. High priority was already being given to improving radio broadcasting facilities, but any future budgetary allocations to existing operating agencies should reflect their status as a national security priority. The proposed NSDD also called for a continuation to the books and publications program which had begun during the Carter administration, all geared towards increasing the general flow of Western information into the USSR, through networks for the distribution of newspapers, books, and cassette-tapes³³². Reagan had already increased funding in this area, which was used for publications, finances and technology, including computers, printers, camera’s, video equipment, photocopiers, fax machines, tape recorders, and printing machines, in support of dissident groups inside the USSR³³³.

The NSDD on Soviet Nationalities issued a call for increased activity in the international sphere in order to highlight the Soviet nationalities issue. The US would maintain its long-standing position of recognising the independence of the Baltic states and refusing to validate their incorporation into the USSR, while continuing to sustain efforts to cooperate with the diplomatic representatives of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and to draw attention to their cause. The NSDD appealed for intensified activities at the United Nations in order to draw attention to the plight of Soviet ethnic and nationality groups, including liaising

³³¹ “United States Policy on Soviet Ethnic and National Groups”, National Security Decision Directive, December 9, 1983, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³³² “United States Policy on Soviet Ethnic and National Groups”, National Security Decision Directive, December 9, 1983, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³³³ Kuzio, U.S. support for Ukraine’s liberation during the Cold War, p11

with the UN Human Rights Commission and UN Decolonization Committee and taking steps that may include raising the issue of Soviet nationalities in statements and debate, especially highlighting the contradictions in the context of Soviet professions of support for self-determination and decolonization while refusing self-determination to their own national groups. It also suggested the US government work with public bodies such as the CSCE Commission, Amnesty International, and other relevant religious and political organizations which were involved in the human rights movement, to ensure that the voice of Soviet ethnic and national groups would be heard at the numerous human rights forums which these groups were involved in.

The proposed NSDD on Soviet nationalities then turned its attention to increasing contact with Soviet society through an increased US physical presence within the USSR, and through regular exchanges with Soviet citizens. The directive returned to the issue of establishing a US consulate in Kiev as an important means of increasing American capabilities regarding developments in the non-Russian areas of the Soviet Union, and totally consistent with NSDD-75. Along with Ukraine, the document also raised the prospect of opening a consulate in the Muslim republics of the USSR, believing active consideration of this matter was required. Soviet nationalities specialists within the US government had been interested in the Central Asian republics as a potential source of weakness to the Soviet Union since the Carter presidency. Although again, the document highlighted the need to avoid worsening the existing disparity between the Soviet official representation in the US and the American official representation in the Soviet Union, which remained a cause for concern for many within the NSC. Another aspect of this policy was cultural, informational, and educational exchanges, and as part of US government efforts to grow the number of U.S.-Soviet exchanges, the Soviet Nationalities Interagency Group would devote "particular attention to exchanges involving the non-Russian areas of the Soviet Union".

The final policy prescription called for increased public statements on the mistreatment of the various Soviet ethnic and national groups at the hands of the Soviet authorities, going so far as to suggest that these statements become a more frequent refrain in US government public announcements. In order to again highlight the double-standards of professed Soviet support for rights of self-determination, these remarks should be couched in terms of universally accepted norms, "especially those norms incorporated in international agreements to which the Soviet Union is a party and those recognised in the Soviet

Constitution”³³⁴. There should be particular emphasis placed on the “plight of the many Soviet human rights activists whose persecution by the Soviet authorities is directly attributable to the efforts of these persons to assert their national traditions; the colonial aspects of Soviet rule over non-Russian peoples; and the problems of religion in the Soviet Union”³³⁵. The action plan detailed in the proposed NSDD was an all-encompassing appraisal of US policy towards the Soviet nationalities and offered a realistic set of policy suggestions which would act as guidelines for future activity. There was a recognised need for more language specialists and experts in the non-Russian nationalities and a call for renewed focus on improvement in this area.

With the suggested creation of a Soviet Nationalities Interagency Group through which all activities in this sphere would be directed, there was an attempt to institutionalise Soviet nationalities policy and embed it within a policy cluster of real influence. There were also several recommendations which outlined the use of public diplomacy, radio broadcasting and covert book distribution, and engagement with multilateral organisations as further methods which the US could employ to advance the cause of the Soviet nationalities. This was not a radical document, it was not laced with provocative policy suggestions, nor pushing for the break-up of the Soviet Union. If anything, the proposed NSDD recognised the limits of what the US government could expect to achieve in this area, and concentrated mainly on information gathering, the continuation of existing broadcasting programs, co-operation with non-state and multilateral actors, and greater efforts in the realm of diplomacy, both public and private.

Nevertheless, the Nationalities Working Group were now very close to cementing US government commitment to the Soviet nationalities in a comprehensive presidential directive. The new NSDD was both tied directly to the objectives of NSDD-75, yet also went much further than that document in exploring and recommending policy towards the ethnic and national groups inside the USSR. The long-held vision of Brzezinski, Henze and Pipes was about to be realised. No more would US policy towards the Soviet nationalities lie outside of the mainstream, merely the terrain of eccentrics and zealous anti-communist hard-liners. The Reagan administration now had a concrete framework for guiding US policy

³³⁴ “United States Policy on Soviet Ethnic and National Groups”, National Security Decision Directive, December 9, 1983, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³³⁵ “United States Policy on Soviet Ethnic and National Groups”, National Security Decision Directive, December 9, 1983, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

towards the nationalities and ethnic groups of the USSR, and it was anchored firmly within the overall Soviet strategy articulated in NSDD-75. On December 9, 1983, John Lenczowski officially forwarded the proposed NSDD on Soviet Nationalities Policy to McFarlane, including a memorandum for Reagan to sign it into effect³³⁶. And then...nothing.

A change of course

By early 1984 George Shultz was beginning to emerge as Reagan's most trusted and influential policy adviser, ably assisted by Soviet expert Jack Matlock of the NSC. Despite hardliners such as Weinberger and Casey still heading up the DoD and CIA respectively, it was the voices counselling Reagan to engage with the Soviets which the president was now listening to. This period, as Hal Brands writes, "has been described as a dramatic "Reagan reversal". It was really more of a calculated Reagan recalibration. The president remained convinced that firmness and pressure were essential to making Moscow cooperate ... Beginning in late 1983 and early 1984, however, he also made overtures designed to moderate the more aggressive aspects of his rhetoric, convince Kremlin leaders that he was genuinely interested in diplomacy, and thereby begin working towards an improved relationship"³³⁷. To that end, Reagan had written to Andropov in December 1983, telling the Soviet leader, who was quite unwell, "I continue to believe that despite the profound differences between our two nations, there are opportunities - indeed a necessity - for us to work together to prevent conflicts, to expand our dialogue, and to place our relationship on a more stable and secure footing ... We are ready to deal seriously and positively with you and your government in an effort to reach mutually acceptable and beneficial solutions to the problems in our relationship"³³⁸. With the move away from the belligerent posturing of the early Reagan years now gaining traction, the intent to dismantle the Soviet system from within also began to wane. This development would have direct ramifications for those inside the administration who were eager to push a harder US line towards the Soviet nationalities.

Near the end of 1983, Shultz and Matlock had begun to organise informal Saturday morning breakfast meetings in a diplomatic reception room on the fabled 8th floor of the State Department. Using Shultz's four-part agenda for negotiations with the Soviets as a basis for

³³⁶ Memo Lenczowski to McFarlane, "NSDD on Soviet Nationalities Policy", December 9, 1983, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL. Jack Matlock, Paula Dobriansky and Walt Raymond were all signatories to this memo.

³³⁷ Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment*, p96

³³⁸ Reagan to Andropov, Presidential Letter, December 20, 1983, The Reagan Files, <https://www.thereaganfiles.com/19831220.pdf>

discussion, these meetings were regularly attended by Shultz, Matlock, McFarlane, Weinberger, Vice President Bush and several other top officials, and their purpose was to thrash out US Soviet policy away from the pressures of the White House. There was an agreement among the group on the key goals of US Soviet policy; to reduce the use and threat of force in international disagreements, to work towards meaningful arms control, to establish a level of trust with the Soviets, and to make progress on human rights and areas of bilateral cooperation. Despite occasionally vehement disagreements, Matlock says, “nobody argued that the United States should try to bring the Soviet Union down. All recognised that the Soviet leaders faced mounting problems but understood that U.S. attempts to exploit them would strengthen Soviet resistance to change rather than diminish it. President Reagan was in favour of bringing pressure to bear on the Soviet Union, but his objective was to induce the Soviet leaders to negotiate reasonable agreements, not to break up the country”. Matlock states that the officials did not wish to force the collapse of the Soviet system, but merely to exert pressure on the Soviets to “live up to agreements and abide by civilised standards of behaviour”³³⁹.

From now on the administration’s approach would be based on realism, strength and negotiation. But this was not the detached realism of the academy; shorn of empathy and human emotion. This was a clear-sighted and realistic appraisal of the US-Soviet relationship as it currently stood; acknowledging the need to respect the Soviet leadership’s fears and insecurities, negotiating from a position of strength yet identifying and building on areas of mutual cooperation, while still pursuing the promotion of human rights and religious freedom within the USSR. As Robert D. Kaplan describes, “it was a realism that embraced both international responsibility and a hard, moral interest in peoples suffering under Communist tyranny ... It knew that interests come before values, since values have greater traction when they emanate from interests”³⁴⁰. And now, far from merely focusing on individual groups within the Soviet Union, Reagan wanted to reach all Soviet citizens. During his State of the Union address to the Joint Houses of Congress in January 1984, Reagan declared, “tonight, I want to speak to the people of the Soviet Union, to tell them it’s true that our governments have had serious differences, but our sons and daughters have never fought each other in war. And if we Americans have our way, they never will. People of the Soviet Union, there is only one sane policy, for your country and mine, to preserve our civilization in this modern age: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought ... Americans are people of peace. If your government wants peace, there will be peace.

³³⁹ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, p75-77.

³⁴⁰ Robert D. Kaplan, “Saving Republican Internationalism”, *National Interest*, May 25, 2020

We can come together in faith and friendship to build a safer and far better world for our children and our children's children. And the whole world will rejoice. That is my message to you”³⁴¹.

The death of Andropov in early February 1984, and the appointment of Konstantin Chernenko as the new Soviet leader, appeared to signal a lacklustre return to hard-line and uncreative Soviet leadership in the Kremlin. Yet Reagan remained undaunted, writing to Chernenko, “I have no higher goal than the establishment of a relationship between our two great nations characterised by constructive cooperation. Differences in our political beliefs and in our perspectives on international problems should not be an obstacle to efforts aimed at strengthening peace and building a productive working relationship ... In the months ahead, we will be ready to discuss with you the entire agenda of issues in which our two nations have an interest”³⁴². In February, McFarlane sketched a “framework for the future” of US-Soviet relations in a memo to Reagan in which he suggested Chernenko’s selection as General Secretary may help to put relations on “a more positive track”.

McFarlane felt it was imperative that Reagan be re-elected in November, and thus the president should be careful in his public utterances in order not to cause either false hope or alarm among the US population. Nevertheless, McFarlane believed they should “move rapidly to put more content into the dialogue” with the Soviets, while also suggesting they should look beyond the current Soviet leadership and expand “opportunities for more broad and effective contacts with a wider public, particularly persons now in their forties and fifties (the successor generation)”³⁴³. The dynamics of the US-Soviet relationship were changing and a fresh impulse for engagement emerging within the White House. Despite his early bluster, Reagan never wished to tear the USSR down from the inside. As Alan Dobson says, “Unlike his more ideological colleagues, Reagan was more pragmatic and never intended or expected to destroy the Soviet Union. However, he was steadfast in his opinion that America’s strength had to be renewed and that negotiations with the Soviets conducted to reach a more stable relationship, one that would reduce the dangers from nuclear weapons and provide a context in which change could occur from within the Soviet Union ...

³⁴¹ “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union”, January 25, 1984, Public Papers of Ronald Reagan, RRDL.

³⁴² Reagan to Chernenko, Presidential Letter, February 11, 1984, The Reagan Files, <https://www.thereaganfiles.com/19840211.pdf>

³⁴³ Shultz to The Director of the CIA, copy of “highly sensitive paper” forwarded by McFarlane to Reagan, “US-Soviet Relations: A Framework for the Future”, February 25, 1984, CIA General Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

Ideology and pragmatism were richly intermingled in Reagan's make-up, evident in his Cold War grand strategy"³⁴⁴.

The end of the Nationalities Working Group

By spring 1984 the US-Soviet relationship was no longer at boiling point, having been reduced to a constant simmer. The white-hot heat of ideological warfare was beginning to cool, and Reagan and his advisers were beginning to move in a new direction. By April, there had still been no response from Reagan or his national security adviser Bud McFarlane regarding the NWG's proposed NSDD on Soviet Nationalities, which had been submitted to the NSC by John Lenczowski in December of the previous year. After months of interagency work to reach the point of submitting the NSDD for the president's approval the trail had gone cold, and there is no record of McFarlane having ever even shown Reagan the document. Members of the group which drafted the potential NSDD were growing restless, and of major concern was the continuing dearth of non-Russian Soviet nationalities specialists within the US government, a long-standing problem which had hampered the government's ability to understand and attempt to influence ethnic issues within the USSR. Robert Kimmitt of the NSC attempted to work around the delay, sending a memo to Charles Hill, the Executive Secretary of the Department of State, requesting permission to press ahead with item one on the NSDD's action plan, saying "the draft NSDD on Soviet Nationalities Policy, submitted earlier by the Department, has not yet been approved. However, while it remains under consideration, the Department is requested to proceed to organize an Interagency Career Management Committee for Soviet Nationality Specialists, which would examine ways to overcome the critical shortage of USG analysts and linguists qualified in Russian and Soviet nationality languages"³⁴⁵.

At the same time, Matlock followed up with McFarlane, applying some pressure to the national security adviser, who appeared to be reluctant to action the proposed NSDD. Although keen to engage the Soviets in dialogue and highly indisposed towards stirring up trouble inside the Soviet Union, Matlock was sensitive to the lack of non-Russian expertise within the US government and felt the proposed NSDD provided an effective way to rectify this disparity. "John Lenczowski sent you a memorandum on December 9, 1983, recommending approval of a draft NSDD on Soviet Nationalities Policy", Matlock told

³⁴⁴ Alan Dobson, "Ronald Reagan's Strategies and Policies: Of Ideology, Pragmatism, Loyalties and Management Style", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27:4, (Dec 2016), p746-765

³⁴⁵ Memo Kimmitt to Hill, "NSDD on Soviet Nationalities Policy", April 6, 1984, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

McFarlane, “if you consider it untimely or inappropriate to have the draft NSDD approved, I believe it would be useful in any event to have State go ahead and take one of the steps in the draft. That is, to organize an Interagency Career Management Committee for Soviet Nationality Specialists, which would examine ways to overcome the critical shortage of USG analysts and linguists qualified in Russian and Soviet nationality languages. We are sorely hampered in our understanding of what is happening in the non-Russian areas of the Soviet Union by a lack of specialists, and development of a cadre will be a lengthy process. Therefore, I believe we should move ahead promptly in this area, even if we decide to delay formal implementation of some of the other recommendations”. Matlock was becoming concerned at the likelihood of the NSDD on Soviet Nationalities being approved in the near future³⁴⁶. Indeed, he was right to be concerned, because the proposed NSDD was never to be approved. And the entire Soviet nationalities project, including the regular meetings of the Nationalities Working Group, was soon to be abandoned.

With the departure of hardliners such as Pipes and Clark, the increasing influence of Shultz and Matlock, the once dominant trend within the Reagan administration toward encouraging the reform of the communist system through the exploitation of internal Soviet weaknesses was waning. The national security adviser Bud McFarlane, who by now was playing an influential role alongside Shultz and Matlock in shaping US policy towards the USSR, seemed particularly indisposed to these ideas. Despite having been involved in the drafting and affirming of NSDD 75, he had always remained uneasy about the document, believing it demonstrated, “no basis for believing that a framework for stability exists”, NSDD 75 only aimed to, “stress the Soviet system as best we can”³⁴⁷. McFarlane was keen to see the US move past the ideological warfare which marked the first two years of the Reagan administration, and also hoped to create new procedures which would make it difficult for the hard-line elements within the US government to dream up strategies which would ultimately lead nowhere³⁴⁸.

Plans were in place to reopen negotiations with the Soviets over the opening of a US consulate in Kiev, which had been postponed after the shooting down of the Korean airliner in late 1983. The State Department believed the time was now ripe to begin talks again, and Matlock and McFarlane agreed³⁴⁹. But the hopes of hard-line groups across various

³⁴⁶ Memo Matlock to McFarlane, “NSDD on Soviet Nationalities Policy”, April 6, 1984, Box 4, Matlock Chron, April 1984 3, Series II, USSR Subject File, Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³⁴⁷ McFarlane quoted in Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p80

³⁴⁸ *ibid*

³⁴⁹ Matlock to McFarlane, “Consular Review Talks with the Soviet Union”, April 17, 1984, Box 4, Matlock Chron April 1984 (1), Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

agencies, who wished to see the US government take a more proactive approach towards exploiting Soviet weaknesses specifically targeting the Soviet nationalities, seemed diminished. The Nationalities Working Group appeared to have run its course, with the White House putting a halt to its regular meetings with no explanation given. It appears the change in the direction of US strategy towards the USSR, combined with an upcoming election campaign in which the president's advisers were eager not to allow the media and the Democrats to paint him as a dangerous ideologue, all played a part in this decision.

Mark Palmer, one of the founding members of the Reagan-era NWG, believed officials around the president, "got nervous about it and stopped it ... They never ordered me to disband it, but they refused to respond. I would send them papers, you know recommendations. I think that they thought that it was something that was going to explode in Ronald Reagan's face politically. I think they thought that it actually would get out that there was such an effort; and that this would look like we were trying to break up the Soviet Union. This would be another charge that, "He's crazy and he's dangerous. This is going to cause an even bigger war". Palmer lamented, "I loved this group. We had wonderful meetings. We had great people. We had great people from USIA, from CIA. I was very depressed that it just fell apart because the White House got nervous. it was a paradox actually. I thought, "Here's a political crowd that actually might be supportive of this sort of thing and get resources for it, get money, have exchanges, and all kinds of stuff." Partly, I think they were worried that they'd be tagged by the press and the centre - if you want, the establishment - as being crazy, as encouraging irresponsible and stupid, destabilizing stuff in a country that had nuclear weapons. I think it was also partly just because they were conservative that they backed away from what was really a solid thing to do. I was a career officer. Maybe I wasn't exactly mainstream, but I certainly thought this was a solid thing to do. A lot of other people did too and we were very disappointed when we were told to stop doing it"³⁵⁰.

There still remained a belief inside the administration that it would be in the United States interests to foster change within the Soviet Union using the limited leverage it possessed, but it was no longer an important plank of an ideologically-driven US Soviet strategy. Matlock explained to McFarlane in early 1984, "while we can have only a marginal effect on the outcome of this internal Soviet process, we should do what we can to strengthen the tendencies toward greater decentralization and openness, since this would produce a Soviet

³⁵⁰ Ambassador Mark Palmer, Oral History Transcript, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, October 30, 1997

Union with less commitment to the use of force and less willing to engage in costly foreign adventures. Therefore, even if the rivalry of our systems did not end (it would not), the U.S.-USSR interaction would be safer and more manageable”³⁵¹.

Going forward however, focus on the Soviet nationalities would largely take place within Shultz’s four-part framework toward wider US-Soviet negotiations, raising issues of human rights abuses in various Soviet republics during talks, and pushing for cultural exchanges and consulate agreements which would appeal to the ethnic interest groups of the US³⁵². As for the proposed NSDD on Soviet Nationalities, in 1986 as Jack Matlock prepared to take up his new role as US ambassador to the Soviet Union, he revealed to NSC staffer Fritz Ermath that, “we worked this interagency, and then McFarlane sat on it and never approved it”³⁵³. The centrepiece policy directive of the Nationalities Working Group, which officials had laboured on for almost a year, and which offered a detailed strategy for the US government to implement towards the ethnic and nationality groups of the Soviet Union, never saw the light of day again.

³⁵¹ Memo McFarlane to Reagan (drafted by Matlock), “US-Soviet Relations: Towards Defining a Strategy”, February 18, 1984, Box 3, Matlock, Chron February 1984 (2), Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

³⁵² Shultz to The Director of the CIA, copy of memo forwarded by McFarlane to Reagan, “US-Soviet Relations: A Framework for the Future”, February 25, 1984, CIA General Records, CIA Digital FOIA Records, CREST

³⁵³ Matlock to Ermath, “Odds and Ends”, December 31, 1986, Box 27, Important History Pre-1987 (Material Left for Fritz Ermath) (3), Jack Matlock Files, RRPL.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the attempts by American policymakers to influence the internal dynamics of the Soviet system by agitating and exploiting the underlying tensions between the regime and the ethnic and linguistic minorities of the USSR. This was an ambitious endeavour, largely driven by hard-line individuals within the Carter and Reagan administrations, and never fully embraced as an integral part of US Cold War strategy. This dissertation has covered the period of 1977 to 1984, which was a transformational and transcendent time in the Cold War struggle, with the relative stability of *détente* giving way to a more confrontational atmosphere between the opposing superpowers.

From the US point of view, the Soviet Union was the antagonist in these developments, as it ramped up both its military spending and its foreign policy adventurism in the Third World. There was a sense within the Carter administration that the USSR was testing American resolve by instigating a series of aggressive foreign policy moves which culminated in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979. In order to curtail this adventurism and promote internal unrest within the USSR, a group of policymakers centred around national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski began to agitate for an increased focus on the internal weaknesses of the Soviet regime, and to promote measures aimed at capitalising on the underlying ethnic tensions within the Soviet Union.

For the Soviet leadership in the Kremlin, the view was very different. To them, the Carter administration had betrayed the fundamental law which upheld *détente*; the mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs. The Soviets looked on with increasing horror as Carter and his team continuously drew attention to human rights abuses and the denial of self-determination within the USSR, policies very much in keeping with the aims of the growing transnational human rights network which emerged following the signing of the Helsinki accords in 1975. This tension continued to simmer into the early 1980s as Ronald Reagan ascended to the White House and barraged the Soviets with hostile rhetoric, while his administration plotted a new and subversive strategy toward the USSR.

The early Reagan administration was largely staffed by anti-communist hard-liners who were eager to promote internal change within the Soviet system, and very receptive to the prospect of using the Soviet nationalities to do so. This formed part of their overall strategy toward the Soviet Union, one geared towards encouraging pluralising and democratisation, and thus blunting Soviet expansionism. The view from Moscow greatly differed, the Soviets

saw an incoming administration which was hellbent on racking up tensions, attacking the legitimacy of their rule, and escalating the risk of nuclear war to unprecedented levels.

The changing nature of the international system and the collapse of *détente* in the late 1970s opened up new opportunities for policymakers to move US foreign policy in innovative directions, particularly with regards to the Soviet Union. The years of *détente* had been marked by a relative de-escalation in tensions between the United States and the USSR, although people in the developing world who often found themselves caught between the crosshairs of two rival superpowers would probably feel like tensions never dissipated at all. Nevertheless, the period witnessed greater negotiation, arms control talks, and mutual co-operation between the rivals. On the US side, the Nixon-Kissinger-Ford triumvirate were very keen to keep the focus on geopolitics and matters of great power diplomacy, and far less on the internal nature of the Soviet regime. With the advent of the Carter presidency in 1977, the strain of realism found among US foreign policymakers which promoted a foreign policy based on maintaining a favourable balance of power in superpower relations had begun to lose its dominance. There was a growing appreciation of the domestic drivers of foreign policy, with policymakers taking a closer look at the inner workings of the Soviet regime in order to understand the USSR's behaviour in the international arena.

For officials such as Brzezinski and Paul Henze, the importance of the Soviet Union's internal nationality problems was obvious. These underlying and unresolved tensions remained just below the surface, occasionally erupting into ethnic protests in the various Soviet republics and hard-liners within the Carter administration began exploring the ways these tensions could be harnessed to serve US interests. By agitating the Soviet nationalities, it was believed the ethnic unrest may impact Soviet activism abroad or even lead to greater self-determination within the USSR, something which would be to the benefit of the United States. Over and above these goals, there was also a feeling that a better understanding of ethnic issues inside the Soviet Union was desperately needed at the highest levels of the US government, with a lack of expertise on this subject proving detrimental to US foreign policy goals.

These themes were echoed after the transition to the Reagan administration in 1981. With a fiercely anti-communist president at the helm, and a White House full of hard-liners, the early years of the Reagan presidency saw a belligerence enter US Soviet strategy which had been absent for a long time. Whereas the policies crafted toward the Soviet nationalities by the Carter administration were largely the domain of zealous anti-communists, and never

fully embraced as a central plank of overall Soviet strategy, the Reagan White House was fully committed to the promotion of internal change within the Soviet Union, explicitly declaring it an objective of US foreign policy. There was a growing desire within US policymaking circles to pay more attention to the internal nature of the Soviet regime, viewing it as an important driver of Soviet foreign policy, and potentially as a source of great weakness to their long-term communist adversary.

Hard-liners such as Richard Pipes and others on the NSC, viewed the Soviet Union's internal ethnic problems as an area ripe for exploitation by the United States, and in the early days of Reagan's presidency these ideas figured prominently within the overall thrust of the administration's strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, by 1984 the dynamics of the US-Soviet relationship were changing, and new presidential advisers were coming to the fore. No longer was the emphasis on attacking the internal legitimacy of the Soviet Union, but on engaging in dialogue which would move the relationship onto a surer footing, allowing concessions to be bought at the negotiating table, and not through ideological warfare.

Part one of this thesis focuses on the years 1977 to 1980, when President Carter attempted to introduce a new sense of morality to American statecraft, and the US-Soviet relationship began to change quite dramatically. Carter arrived in Washington as the consummate outsider, in every sense of the word. In the wake of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal, Carter promised his presidency would be different; human rights would be front and centre, and the cynicism of previous administrations would be a thing of the past. Carter was unknown to most Americans and journalists, and an image began to emerge of the president as a naïve moralist with an unsophisticated view of world affairs and overly optimistic hopes of transcending Cold War bipolarity. However, Carter's legacy is undergoing some scholarly revision, and while it is painfully obvious there were a number of high profile foreign policy setbacks on his watch, it is also becoming more apparent that Carter held a more nuanced understanding of Cold War rivalry than previously attributed to him. Carter saw no distinction between values and interests, believing a moral foreign policy served America's national interest, as well as being a good in itself. And as Nancy Mitchell has demonstrated, Carter was under no illusions as to the true nature of the Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union. Carter was an "ardent but quiet Cold Warrior", determined not to see Kremlin plots

everywhere, yet uncompromising in his continuation of containment and a new-found desire to expose the internal contradictions of the Soviet system³⁵⁴.

His vision for a more activist approach to détente was shared and pursued vigorously by Brzezinski, with Carter assenting to his national security adviser's plans to attack the internal cohesion of the USSR. Brzezinski was a zealous anti-Soviet hawk and had long harboured a desire to exploit the inner weaknesses of the Soviet empire, since his days as a graduate student he had believed the nationalities of the Soviet Union were a potentially corrosive influence inside the Soviet system. Part one of this thesis explored Brzezinski's role in re-introducing the power of ideology into US statecraft. He possessed powerful ideas about the ideological nature of the Cold War conflict, believing it was a struggle for dominance between two deeply antithetical visions of world order. For Brzezinski, the Carter administration's support for human rights and dissidents behind the Iron Curtain would act as a battering ram, and also afforded him the opportunity to shine a spotlight on the ethnic and nationality problems of the USSR. By provoking and encouraging internal problems for the Soviets, the hope was that the Kremlin would restrain its foreign policy adventurism and focus on issues at home. Brzezinski issued orders to craft policies which would target and exploit these tensions through radio broadcasting, covert book and publication programs, and improving US government knowledge of the issue.

This thesis focuses on the individuals tasked with carrying these orders out, none more so than the NSC Soviet nationalities specialist Paul Henze, who approached the task with relentless energy and combative intensity. The push to gain a better understanding of Soviet ethnic issues, and to translate this knowledge into policy options aimed at exploiting these tensions, became an almost obsessive mission for Henze. He formed a Nationalities Working Group, which would become a multiagency forum for discussing the latest academic research on Soviet nationality problems, and a talking shop for drawing up concrete policy proposals. Henze was at the heart of the administration's efforts to expand radio broadcasting to the Soviet republics and liaised with the CIA over their covert operations behind the Iron Curtain. Fellow hard-liners such as Colonel Odom and Sam Huntington shared the desire to make life difficult for the Soviet regime, but it was Henze who took Brzezinski's ideas and spearheaded the effort to turn them into reality. In exploring these themes deeply, this thesis reveals that while powerful figures such as Brzezinski and Henze

³⁵⁴ Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* (Stanford, Stanford University Press 2016), p8-10

were driving US efforts to engage the Soviet nationalities, these ideas never fully formed a central part of US strategy toward the USSR during the Carter era. Anti-communist hardliners, such as Henze and his academic associates, remained somewhat out the mainstream of American foreign policy-thinking. Constant battles over budgetary issues, and strong resistance to these ideas from within the State Department and the US foreign policy establishment, meant that Henze ultimately felt frustrated as Carter left the White House.

Nevertheless, a new avenue for exploration had been opened. The Carter administration may have wished to focus on issues other than merely the Cold War struggle, with human rights and the developing world deserving more attention in a fast-changing international system. But at the behest of the president, the hawks within the administration also engaged in the continuing containment of Soviet power, and increasingly focused on assaulting the internal weaknesses of the USSR. As Robert Gates has described, "Carter had, in fact, changed the long-standing rules of the Cold War. Through his human rights policies, he became the first president since Truman to challenge directly the legitimacy of the Soviet government in the eyes of its own people. And the Soviets immediately recognised this for the fundamental challenge that it was: they believed he sought to overthrow their system"³⁵⁵. Carter, Brzezinski, and Henze laid the foundations for the destabilisation of the Soviet regime by exploiting its own weaknesses, specifically the human rights abuses and the denial of self-determination for its nationality groups. Carter may have limped from office, but these powerful ideas were picked up and continued by the incoming Reagan administration in 1981.

Part two of this thesis revealed the continued attempts by US policymakers to explore and exploit the ethnic problems of the USSR during the early Reagan years, highlighting the individuals involved and their policy proposals. The beliefs of Brzezinski and Henze about the internal weaknesses of the Soviet system were also held by many hard-liners in the new administration, which was determined to strike a new tone in US-Soviet relations and proactively push back against Soviet expansionism in the Third World. Reagan himself arrived in the White House with a set of unshakable core beliefs about the nature of communism and the moral superiority of the American system. His own views on the Soviet Union had developed over the course of many decades, he believed the Soviet regime was rife with internal contradictions and he wished to see the end of communism both in Eastern

³⁵⁵ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insiders Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p95

Europe and around the world. Reagan was also a naturally amiable person, non-confrontational, and valued the importance of trust and personal relationships. Alongside his ardent anti-communism, he also believed he could reach out to the Soviet leadership as fellow human beings, hoping a mutual fear of nuclear war could lead to increased co-operation.

This thesis has described how these conflicting impulses were to plague the president over the first few years of his time in the White House, torn between taking an uncompromising posture toward the Soviet Union, yet also eager to reach out to Moscow and engage the Soviet leadership in productive dialogue. These contradictions are important because they precluded the creation of any grand strategy towards the Soviet Union, at least in the early days of the administration, and they also allowed room for anti-Soviet hard-line positions to gain real currency within the administration.

During 1981 and 1982, the anti-communist hawks in the White House held sway, and there was a palpable desire among these hard-liners to attack the internal cohesion of the Soviet Union and attempt to promote pluralistic tendencies within the Soviet system. This dissertation has shown that an important aspect of this enterprise was the creation of coherent policies that would exploit the Soviet nationalities issues as part of a wider assault on the internal legitimacy of the USSR. At the forefront of these efforts was Richard Pipes, the Harvard professor of Russian history who, like Brzezinski, held a long-standing belief that the nationalities of the Soviet Union were a ticking time bomb for the Soviet authorities and that the US should exploit these ethnic problems as an official part of US Cold War strategy.

Pipes was vociferously anti-communist, and his ideas were long considered outside of the mainstream within American academia. Yet he gained a position of relative influence within the White House as the Soviet expert on the NSC, briefing the president personally during 1982 after being championed by Reagan's hard-line national security adviser William Clark. Pipes was tasked with crafting a concrete national security strategy and was eager to see the introduction of policies aimed at exploiting the internal weaknesses of the Soviet system during his time on the NSC, particularly towards the ethnic groups within the Soviet republics.

Similarly, this thesis has detailed how Henze's Nationalities Working Group was revived during the early part of Reagan's first term and continued to perform the same role as it had during the Carter presidency; namely, as a forum for bringing together representatives of various agencies across the US government who shared an interest in the Soviet

nationalities and were interested in creating policies specifically aimed at exploiting Soviet ethnic tension included as part of US Cold War strategy. The group met regularly at the State Department over the following few years, going even further than the Carter-era NWG by drafting an in-depth policy proposal towards the Soviet ethnic and minority groups which they hoped would be translated into an official presidential directive.

This dissertation explored the ways the NWG hoped to engage with the problem of the Soviet nationalities, which included a blend of radio broadcasting, covert action, and public diplomacy. Pipes and the members of the NWG also recognised the lack of expertise on Soviet nationality issues within the US government and called for the recruitment and training of area and linguistic specialists in order to fill this void. In this endeavour they were supported by the more moderate-minded Jack Matlock, who replaced Pipes as Reagan's Soviet expert on the NSC in 1983 and was eager to see the administration improve its understanding of ethnic issues inside the Soviet empire, although without sharing the same intention to stir up trouble for the Soviets as some of his more hard-line colleagues.

Indeed, it was Matlock's influence within the administration, alongside that of secretary of state George Shultz, that was to steer the president towards more fruitful engagement with the Soviet leadership. This dissertation has shown that Shultz's four-part framework for negotiations with the Soviets unofficially superseded the more abrasive NSDD-75 with its emphasis on promoting pluralism inside the USSR. By 1984 the administration was less focused on undermining the Soviet system from within and more open to promoting issues such as human rights and national self-determination through official dialogue with Moscow, even before Gorbachev arrived on the scene in 1985. This thesis has revealed that efforts to exploit the ethnic tensions of the USSR had largely fallen by the wayside, especially with the departure of Pipes and Clark from the White House in late 1982, with the NWG ultimately being wound up in early 1984. As Jack Matlock would say years later, Reagan "refused to play the "nationality card," attempts to stir up the non-Russian populations of the Soviet Union ... he did not set out to bring the Soviet Union down. He tried to use U.S. strength to convince the Soviet leaders that they could not win an arms race and would not be allowed to dominate other countries by military force. He tried to change Soviet behaviour, not to destroy the Soviet Union"³⁵⁶.

³⁵⁶ Jack F. Matlock Jr., Kennan's Understanding of the Cold War, *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Winter 2005), p313- 319

This thesis has opened up many avenues for potential future research on US policy towards the Soviet nationalities and the non-Russian republics of the USSR. As the communist regimes of Eastern Europe began to fall one by one in 1989, the Soviet Union itself would soon topple into the abyss and vanish from history. Nationalism raged from the Baltics, to Ukraine, to the Caucasus, as the non-Russian republics grew increasingly assertive in their demands for autonomy and Mikhail Gorbachev struggled to maintain Moscow's grip on its empire. Of course, along with nationalism there were many other reasons why the USSR would eventually collapse in 1991; economic stagnation, Gorbachev's failed reforms, and communism's loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. Yet nationalism proved to be the force which would finally tear the Soviet Union asunder, beginning in the Baltics and spreading like wild-fire until eventually the entire empire disintegrated under the intensity of its flames. These long-simmering nationalist currents were finally unleashed when Gorbachev's introduction of perestroika and glasnost removed the lid from the pressure cooker and emboldened the cries for self-determination within many of the Soviet republics.

American policymakers such as Brzezinski, Henze and Pipes had long believed nationalism would finally prove to be the USSR's undoing, and perhaps they were correct in urging the US government to explore the subject of the Soviet nationalities during the late 1970's and early 1980's. By 1988, Reagan and Gorbachev had formed a close bond, and the US-Soviet relationship reached levels of co-operation previously unthinkable. This dissertation has shown that the desire within the Reagan administration to exploit the ethnic tensions of the Soviet Union waned as the president neared the end of his first term in office. Moderate voices were now in the ascendancy within the White House, and the US-Soviet relationship was beginning to evolve in a slightly less confrontational direction, even before Gorbachev arrived on the scene.

Yet more scholarship is required on policies enacted during Reagan's second term, in order to discover the extent to which the administration monitored the nationality issues within the Soviet Union as they became more and more prevalent towards the end of the decade. This can only be achieved with the increased declassification of documents on the Soviet nationalities from the second Reagan term, yet future work on this subject could prove most insightful. Additionally, after leaving office, Brzezinski and Pipes would continue to write on the subject of nationalism within the Soviet Union, and it would be illuminating to examine the ways in which they continually attempted to influence US Cold War policy from

outside the White House. More ambitious yet, perhaps archival work in some of the key former republics of the Soviet Union would reveal the extent to which US efforts to reach the Soviet nationalities were actually effective and highlight whether American covert activities and radio broadcasting to the republics had any impact at all among the people there.

Moreover, a deeper study of George HW Bush and his administration's approach to the Soviet nationalities and the fast-splintering republics of the USSR would be a welcome addition to the literature. Historians such as Jeffrey Engel and Serhii Plokhy have done a wonderful job in detailing US policy during the period of the communist collapse, highlighting both Bush's expertise in handling the situation yet also critiquing his administration for being slightly behind the curve as events in Eastern Europe and the USSR unfolded³⁵⁷. Most research on this period has highlighted Bush's reluctance to encourage the nationalist forces within the Soviet Union, for fear of provoking instability which would imperil Gorbachev's control over the nation.

Yet perhaps there was more going on. Perhaps, as realists, the Bush administration were eager to squeeze every last concession from their declining adversary before the window of opportunity slammed shut, thus tempering their support for self-determination in the non-Russian republics. Had the work of the Nationalities Working Group been allowed to continue, perhaps the US would have found itself in a position to better understand the nationalism, personalities, and fast-moving events in the Soviet republics at the time of the Soviet collapse. Thus, a truly in-depth study of the Bush administration's policies toward the Soviet republics would be another welcome addition to scholarship on the period, and this dissertation paves the way for such an endeavour by opening a line of research into US policies in this area during a slightly earlier period of the Cold War.

Furthermore, these issues are most pertinent to current scholarly debates around NATO expansion into Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, debates which have engrossed scholars such as Josh Shiffrin and Marie Elise Sarrotte³⁵⁸. By tracing the long-

³⁵⁷ See Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014) and Jeffrey A. Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Mariner Books, 2017).

³⁵⁸ The scholarly debate over NATO expansion has become something of an ongoing sub-plot within the field of international history. For an example of the discussion see, Mary Elise Sarrotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to 'Bribe the Soviets Out' and Move NATO In," *International Security*, 35 (July 2010): 110-37 and "Not One Inch Eastward? Bush, Baker, Kohl, Genscher, Gorbachev and the Origin of Russian Resentment Toward NATO Enlargement in February 1990," *Diplomatic History*, 34 (January 2010): 119-40; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No

term trajectory of US policy towards the republics of the Soviet Union, future research will allow a clearer picture to emerge of the factors driving US policymakers who were tasked with crafting security policies toward the post-Soviet space. This dissertation lays the foundation for a better understanding of US policy toward the former republics of the Soviet Union by provoking us to consider the attitude of policymakers inside the US government toward ethnic issues in the Soviet republics. Ethnic unrest proved to be a problem which both the Bush and Clinton administrations were eventually forced to wrestle with in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, as ethnic conflict erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh, tensions mounted between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the threat of instability persisted in the Baltics and Ukraine. Future scholarship on American policies towards the former Soviet republics in the immediate years following the collapse of communist rule could prove highly instructive for our understanding of the region today.

This thesis has highlighted an area of research which has largely remained unexplored by historians of the later period of the Cold War. The attempts of US policymakers to exploit the nationality problems of the USSR during the period 1977 and 1984 have largely escaped serious historical study, and thus this dissertation fills this gap. The motivations of these officials were clear; to increase the awareness and understanding of the Soviet nationalities within the United States government, to undermine the internal fabric and attack the legitimacy of the Soviet Union, and to promote calls for increased pluralism and autonomy within the USSR. Largely driven by hard-line individuals across the Carter and Reagan administrations, these policies gained traction at a time of upheaval within the international system and the US-Soviet relationship itself.

The collapse of détente and an increased focus on the internal nature of the Soviet regime encouraged policymakers to introduce powerful ideas into the foreign policy discourse and attempt to implement plans which would put these ideas into practice. This thesis has shown that American attempts to harness the power of nationalism within the USSR to serve US Cold War objectives became possible at a particular moment in time, pushed by policymakers who had long dreamed of such an opening, but that these ideas would untimely pass from the scene as US-Soviet relations entered a phase of increased dialogue and

Deal? The End of the Cold War and the US Offer to Limit NATO Expansion”, *International Security* 40, no. 4 (2016): 7-44 and “NATO Enlargement - Was There a Promise?”, *International Security* 42, no. 1 (2017): 189-92.

engagement by 1985. It is somewhat ironic that these efforts were commenced under Carter, often seen as more dovish, while they were wound down under Reagan, long viewed as the ardent Cold Warrior. This thesis has shown that much work remains in disentangling and understanding US policy objectives during the final years of the Cold War.

By drawing out these concepts, highlighting the power of individuals to drag hitherto unfashionable ideas about the Soviet nationalities from the periphery to the very centre of Cold War strategy, even briefly, this dissertation has contributed to our understanding of the period and the strategic thinking which was taking place within the US government as the Cold War passed through an important transitional phase, before beginning to move towards its end point with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. The Soviet Union itself was soon to be ablaze with the fires of nationalism, as predicted by policymakers such as Brzezinski, Henze and Pipes, and these men were right to highlight the power of nationalism as a force for change within the USSR.

Beginning in the late 1970s, US policymakers began to pay more attention to the potent centrifugal political forces which would eventually destroy the Soviet Union, with Njolstad declaring, “there were actually those within the Carter administration who were arguing that this was exactly how the Cold War might one day come to an end. More than that: they had designed a strategy of ‘competitive engagement’”, which they believed would allow the US to press home its advantages in the early 1980s³⁵⁹. These strategists had been given an opportunity to act on their long-standing beliefs, a platform to turn their ideas into practical policies, to take their ideological warfare to the very heart of the Soviet empire. Potent as these concepts were, however, more powerful ideas eventually triumphed. Ideas which favoured a balanced and realistic approach to US Soviet relations and did not seek to bring the Soviet Union down from the inside. And in the end, the Soviet nationalities were able to throw off Moscow’s yoke without outside help.

³⁵⁹ Olav Njolstad, “The Carter Legacy: Entering the Second Era of the Cold War”, *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Resolution*, ed. by Olav Njolstad (London: Frankl Cass, 2004), p218

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